

**Risk and Resilience in Narratives of Newcomer Youth Affected by Forced
Migration and Interrupted Education: A Canadian Educational Setting**

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by
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Abstract

This interdisciplinary dissertation is the result of action research to better understand the academic, social, and emotional needs of youth who arrive in Canada with experiences of interrupted education and forced migration. In the province of Saskatchewan, where there has been a dramatic rise in immigration since 2009, the infrastructure to meet the needs of newcomer youth with high emotional and academic needs remains undeveloped. By taking a youth perspective and employing anti-oppressive methodologies, this study serves to address the gap in research regarding the challenges that create barriers to successful integration into Canadian society as well as the factors that assist youth in living well despite tremendous obstacles.

In an effort to employ a methodology that was compatible with an English as an additional language (EAL) classroom setting, narratives were collected in various ways. Eight students in a sheltered (EAL student only) Language Arts class wrote journal entries, reflective essays, illustrated children's books, and photo essays. Students also engaged in peer interviews, in-class storytelling as well as personal interviews with the researcher. Three additional EAL students from various classes in the same school submitted personal stories and journal entries. Three teachers were interviewed regarding their use of storytelling as part of the academic program and to build rapport with students.

The findings of this study highlight the factors of risk and resilience identified by the student and teacher participants. Factors of risk include pre-migration poverty, experiences of trauma, persecution, large gaps in first language education, and forced migration. Post-migration factors such as the need for appropriate educational programs, loneliness and lack of friends, as well as economic struggles were identified as significant barriers to wellbeing and integration. The youth also showed great insight into the factors that increased their wellbeing and identified the people, places, activities, and values that comforted them in times of overwhelming despair.

Through their stories, the youth demonstrated the personal qualities that enhanced their resilience and shared words of wisdom for Canadian-born teachers and youth new to Canada.

A secondary role of this inquiry was to explore the use of narratives in a classroom setting as way of opening conversations between teachers and students. EAL teachers often take on the role of counsellor and advisor despite having little training for such emotionally demanding tasks. Therefore, there is a great need to introduce teachers to methods of healing in culturally sensitive and familiar spaces. Regular classroom teachers are often unaware of EAL students' challenging life stories, strength of character, and rich experiential learning. Narrative activities can work to mitigate cultural misunderstandings and build social capital. Storytelling is a viable strategy to encourage language learning, build community, and address emotionally difficult issues while serving as a research methodology to inform education theory and practice.

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and the consequences of trauma affect young migrants around the world. Both Dr. Guzder and Dr. Kristal-Andersson stressed the importance of teachers in the process of healing.

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Introduction

This thesis is a qualitative, action research inquiry into the needs of youth who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration. The youths' experiences range from leaving a country of origin for temporary visits to traumatic escapes from countries in conflict. The educational challenges of immigrant and refugee youth are multifaceted and encompass psychological and sociological factors. For this reason, an interdisciplinary approach is most appropriate. Finding solutions for complicated issues requires "creative solutions involving new approaches and methods that span several traditional fields of knowledge" (Szabo, 1995). Therefore, I draw on literature and research from education, psychology, and sociology.

Educational propositions support theories regarding the role of schools in the adjustment of immigrant and refugee youth (Coventry, Guerra, MacKenzie, & Pinkney, 2003; Ingleby & Watters, 2002), the use of personal narratives in teaching English as an additional language (EAL), literacy development (Freeman, Freeman & Mercuri, 2002; Klinger, 2010), as well as the need to prepare teachers to cope with diverse student needs (Wilson, 2011). Theories regarding the influence of migration on cultural identity (James, 2001; Suárez-Orozco, 2000), trauma, and healing (Herman, 1992; Rousseau & Guzder, 2008) come from psychology. From sociology come critiques of multiculturalism in North America (Frideres, 1992; Heath, 1994), as well as the influence of social discourse and public policy on the successful integration of immigrants and refugees (Hébert & Wilkinson, 2002).

Most importantly, when principles of equality shape the lenses through which educators and psychologists gaze, the results are models of anti-oppressive education (Giroux, 2005; Kohn, 2006) and research (hooks, 2004; Rudduck, 2007) that highly value participants' voices. Using a social justice perspective to explore the educational, psychological and social needs of youth new

to Canada is necessary considering federal and provincial initiatives to raise academic performance on standardized tests. Muhammad (2009) points to the failure of educational programs implemented by conservative governments in the United States of American and more recently in Canada:

Even though today's political climate calls for an egalitarian system of education that is dedicated to learning for all students . . . we have institutional barriers in place . . . that make that goal very difficult. These policies and procedures are so ingrained . . . that we often fail to recognize their presence and power. (p. 25)

In this study, I take a youth perspective in order to shed light on the barriers to successful settlement such as paucity of educational programs to meet high literacy needs; undeveloped infrastructure to support newcomer youth who have experienced trauma; minimal social supports for families struggling to integrate into a new culture. In order to provide a balanced portrayal of youth new to Canada, this study brings attention to the factors that increase youths' academic, social and emotional resilience. This includes the individual, familial, and cultural factors that increase youths' capacity to cope with the migration process and ultimately enrich Canadian society. The consequence of drawing on various fields of research is that the format of this dissertation takes on an interdisciplinary approach.

This dissertation is an exploration in moving toward understanding in text, which rose out of my concern to avoid perpetuating stereotypes of physically and culturally different people created by colonizers studying *the Other* (Said, 1979) , and a willingness to drastically modify the use of realist text (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000). At the same time, I recognize that there are similar criteria for good practice in both quantitative and qualitative studies (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). In qualitative research, credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability respectively parallel internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity in quantitative research (Schwandt, 2007). In an effort to construct a research document that reflects my professional and personal growth, the formats of the chapters differ according to my need to understand previous research or reflect on my learning and experiences. The chapters devoted to my reflections and to the presentation of participants' stories are written in a narrative, first person, past tense, subjective style. Because the stories we tell about our lives are social constructions, I have used everyday language in my narrative accounts (Murray, 2003). Conversely, the literature review chapters are presented in a third person, present tense format. Each chapter addresses issues related to my queries regarding the educational, social and emotional adjustment of youth who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration. To this end, I ask the question: What are the pre- and post-migration factors that negatively affect newcomer youths' capacity to successfully integrate into Canadian society, and what are the factors that support youth to be resilient in the face of migration challenges?

In Chapter One, I describe my learning journey as a teacher of English as an Additional Language (EAL) moving to graduate studies. I use the term *journey* as a metaphor for the process of learning rather than focusing solely on the destination or end product of a degree. My story begins with descriptions of struggling newcomer youth and the concerns that led me to return to university to seek solutions. I describe the social situation in Saskatchewan as the immigrant population increased dramatically without adequate settlement support. Following this, I explain how my quest for understanding led me to pursue an interdisciplinary degree. All aspects of my life greatly influenced the subsequent path of my learning journey. Consequently, I end the chapter with the theoretical stance and perspectives which guide my decisions regarding research and teaching.

Chapter Two is a review of the literature related to risk, resilience and social change; this is presented in three sections. In the first section, I draw attention to the numerous pre- and post-migration factors that contribute to the accumulation of risk (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1996) for youth who experience interrupted education and forced migration. This includes educational factors (Phan, 2002), emotional factors (Nadeau & Measham, 2006), and social factors (Yu, Ouellet, & Warmington, 2007).

In order to present a balanced perspective and avoid portraying newcomers as helpless victims (Feldmann, Bensing, Ruijter, & Boeijs, 2007), in the second section, I review the literature regarding the factors that buffer risk and foster resilience. Beginning with a definition of resilience across cultures (Cameron, Fox, Anderson & Cameron, 2010), I outline the need to avoid a Eurocentric model of resilience (Ungar, 2008) and move beyond a deficit model that focuses on what newcomers cannot do. Alternatively, I strive to understand the development of culturally-diverse people (McAdam-Crisp, 2006) and focus on the assets newcomers bring to Canada. With this perspective, I highlight factors of resilience including; personality features and social skills (Morland, 1999); family and friends (Walmond, Oxenber, & Tewelde, 2006); and teachers and schools (Ingleby & Watters, 2002).

In the third section, I present the literature related to the power of stories. With the acknowledgment that narratives styles differ across cultures and are influenced by individual perspective and the purpose for retelling, I define stories or narratives as the written, symbolic or oral process of sharing personal reflections and recollections of events. The use of narratives can also be problematic as a teaching tool when cultural differences come into opposition. For example, if an immigrant student uses a culturally familiar children's story theme that entails a lion eating a child, a Canadian-born teacher may find the narrative unacceptable forgetting that

many European-based fairy tales include cradles falling from trees and witches fattening children for their personal consumption.

As a research tool, storytelling has benefits and challenges. Narrative inquiries are pertinent to research with youth who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration because storytelling can be used to promote literacy learning (Haas Dyson, 1994) , emotional wellbeing (Hong Kingston, 2006), and social change (Bell, 2010). A narrative inquiry meets my needs to create an action research project that is methodologically sound and contributes to the academic growth and emotional wellbeing of the student participants. Challenges are created when researchers focus on *the truth* of stories rather than considering that the stories we tell are influenced by our understanding of events. Whether the stories presented by youth are in opposition or harmony with a teacher's or researcher's values, the story itself provides another way of understanding the storyteller's world view and past experiences. Most importantly, stories present the possibility for discussion.

Chapter Three is my story of a research journey, which is a description of the methodology that fit my personal philosophy and the research setting (Crotty, 1998). First, I explain my rationale for using action research (Freire, 2001). In the next stage of the journey, I explain how I prepared to do research and determined the research setting. Because knowledge of a society comes from a position within it (Marsella, Johnson, Watson, & Gryczynski, 2008; Smith, 2005), I introduce the participants through stories using excerpts from my observations as well as participants' personal writings and interviews. Next I describe the process and viability of gathering stories through written and oral storytelling in action research with culturally-diverse participants (Harper, 2000; McKenzie & Hansson, 2009). The narrative collection

methods include written essays, stories and journal entries; Photovoice (Feuerverger & Richards, 2007); the interview process (Charmz, 2000); and classroom observations (Mason, 2007).

The final section of Chapter Three is devoted to understanding stories and interpreting narratives. I present my reasons for using an inductive model based on grounded theory and a systematic strategy to develop categories and themes arising from the stories (Charmaz, 1995). The narrative structure of this chapter is purposefully utilized to reduce the concept of “the other” and to position myself in the text (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000).

In Chapters Four to Seven, I present the findings of this action research study. Chapter Four is students’ stories of academic and social risk. The student-identified academic risks are: the need for English; interrupted and limited formal education; pressure to graduate; persecution. The social risks include: poverty; and illicit activity; relocation, fractured families, and loss of strong ties; the absence of social networks and weak ties; and cultural confusions. Chapter Five is students’ stories of emotional risk which include: the fear of winter; identity confusion; becoming adults too soon; and forced migration, violence, and trauma. Chapter Six is students’ stories of academic, family, and social supports. The participants identified academic supports such as attachment to school and teachers as allies. Family and social supports identified by the students were: family assistance with resettlement; family connections with the past; attachment to siblings, attachment to a primary caregiver; and positive peer relationships. Chapter Seven is strategies and attributes for growing up well, which were identified or demonstrated by the youth in this study: valued sources of wellbeing; guiding principles of social justice and religion; learning from adversity, being hopeful, having a sense of humour; and having empathy. The student participants’ stories are presented with minimal editing with the intention of maintaining the human quality of the narratives (Charmaz, 1995) and the voice of those typically on the

margins of society (Rudduck, 2007). At the end of each chapter, I discuss the relevance of the findings in relation to the literature, the field of teaching EAL, and theories of trauma and healing.

Chapter Eight contains my concluding thoughts on my learning journey. I present my understanding of the emotional, social, and educational needs of youth who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration. Also, I reflect on the use of action research and a multi-method approach. Since a goal of action research is to make social change, I recommend policy changes at federal, provincial, and school division levels based on the literature and the findings of my research. Finally, I contemplate my life as an adult ally of youth who are new to Canada. I have used this approach for three reasons: a) to provide teacher-researchers opportunities to reflect on school practices, b) to include the voices of youth with lived experience, and c) to develop curricula and social policies, each of which will benefit all persons in our society (Feuerverger & Richards, 2007; Muhammad, 2009). I have come to understand that when pre- and post-migration risk factors accumulate and overwhelm youth new to Canada, the capacity to successfully integrate into a new society is negatively affected. The factors that mitigate risk and develop resilience are a complex combination of personal and social factors that can be enhanced in a school setting and in the larger community. By listening to the voices of youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees, adult allies can more accurately assess factors of risk and resilience.

Chapter One

The Story of My Learning Journey

Since “[t]rue education is that which helps us to know the *atman*, our true self” (Gandhi, 1932, p. 182), the story of my learning journey to graduate school is a contemplation of my teaching experiences, educational choices, and philosophical perspectives. With the understanding that concepts of social justice and marginalization are created through language (Bell, 2010), I use the term English as an *additional* language (EAL) rather than English as a *second* language (ESL) in order to acknowledge and value the achievements of newcomers who arrive in Canada with multilingual skills. In addition, I frequently use the term *youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees* in order to demonstrate my belief that the status by which people enter Canada is not a life-long condition; it is a term of reference. Often I utilize the simplified phrase *immigrant and refugee youth* as I describe the social, emotional, and educational challenges youth experience despite the acquisition of Canadian citizenship. My love of storytelling and comfort with narrative style leads me to present the findings of my journey in a form that is accessible to educators, school administrators, academics, and community members in general.

In this chapter, I use the metaphor of migration in my transition from the culture of teaching EAL to the culture of graduate studies. The description of the journey begins in section one with the observations of struggling newcomer youth that sent me on a quest for answers. In the second section, I reflect on the path of learning I chose, and how it was greatly influenced by my perspectives and values. In the third section, I reflect on my transformation from leader to

learner during this journey and the development of the theoretical stance which influenced the direction of my research.

1.1 Migration from the Culture of Teaching

In my career, teaching youth between 13 and 22 years of age who arrived in Canada as refugees and immigrants, complex issues related to social and academic settlement were an overwhelming and daunting enigma for me. Over an eight-year period of teaching immigrant and refugee secondary school students, I watched youth arrive in Canada with great enthusiasm and dreams for higher education. Many students quickly acclimatized to the school milieu and successfully reached their goals with only minor bumps along the way. Some students came to realize that being set back by language development required an adjustment of goals, which was painful but bearable. A third group caused me the greatest concern. I watched helplessly as students who could not cope with the academic demands of school lost their initial enthusiasm and hope for the future. Some students literally withered before my eyes as their emotional turmoil negatively affected their physical wellbeing. Some dropped out of school to work. Others retreated to the safe world of computer games and first-language television programs. Others became involved in high risk activities, gang affiliation, and substance abuse which led to incarceration and, for two students, death.

As I gained experience with newcomers, I learned about the many differences and similarities between students who arrive as immigrants and refugees. The criteria for entering Canada as an immigrant or as a refugee are very different. A refugee is a person who:

Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail

himself of the protection of that country. (Retrieved from
<http://www.amnesty.ca/Refugee/who.php>)

In contrast, immigrants enter Canada under two streams: 1) “economic immigrants [are] admitted on the grounds of labour market skills, education, language skills, or capital investment in Canada,” or 2) “the family class, which consists of spouses, fiancées, children, parents, and grandparents of Canadian citizens” (Weinfeld & Wilkinson, 1999, p. 62). The program through which youth enter Canada is not determined by academic skills obtained in the country of origin. Even for youth who arrive under the same immigration category, the first language education scenarios vary considerably.

Over the years, I observed that not all refugees arrive with limited first language education; some are well-educated professionals. Conversely, not all immigrant children fit the stereotype of being strong academics. Previously, our EAL classroom was predominantly populated by the children of highly educated immigrants, but the demographics quickly changed with the implementation of programs to bring in skilled and semi-skilled workers. A 2009 statistical report by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration (AEEI) explained the skyrocketing increase in newcomers to the province:

The flow of immigrants to Saskatchewan followed a slight upward trend from 1999 to 2005, with significant annual increases since 2005, almost entirely due to an expansion of the SINP [Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program]. In 2009, total immigration increased by 42.5 percent. . . . These statistics reflect Saskatchewan’s efforts to benefit from immigration and to promote the province as a great place to live, work, and raise a family. Over the 10-year period, total immigration to Saskatchewan increased from 1,882 in 2000 to 6,890 in 2009, or 266 percent. (p. 4)

The 2009 AEEI report showed that the majority of immigrants at that time were welders, farm workers, and cooks.

The children of immigrant labourers faced challenges adjusting to the Saskatchewan education system because they arrived with previous education in technical schools where academic instruction was limited. Some youth had prior migration experiences and subsequent gaps in education. For example, several families moved from Russia to Germany to Canada. Another family moved from China to Chile to Canada. Surprisingly, numerous students who arrived from Germany, Ukraine, China and the Philippines at the age of 18 had already been in the workforce as mechanics, electricians, carpenters, and cooks for three, four, or even five years. Prior to this, I had repeated the mantra to colleagues that it was of utmost importance to disaggregate immigrant and refugee youth because of specific needs, but the defining academic and psycho-social characteristics became blurred.

A major difference between immigrant and refugee students was the ability to return to the country of origin. Guzder (2008) called returning to the homeland “refuelling” which is much like a child in distress running to a parent for comfort and security. With this stabilizing force, the child is able to continue with previously challenging activities. I observed that while most immigrants traveled freely between countries, refugee students were unable to return until they became Canadian citizens. Some immigrant students were unable to return home because continued unrest in their countries of origin made travel far too dangerous. I began to realize that the consequences of violence and persecution could be similar for youth who arrived as refugees or immigrants.

Before this, I expected to see only refugee youth arrive with experiences of violence, incarceration, and limited first language education, but I began to see that this was not the case.

The Saskatchewan business class immigration program allowed families, with enough capital to start a small business in the province to escape from countries such as Iran and Pakistan, which are plagued by political instability. The majority of youth in this category arrived with strong first language experiences but also with the fear of persecution, the overwhelming concern for friends and family left behind, and the invisible scars of experiencing and witnessing brutality.

The EAL student population at the school where I worked also changed with the rapid housing developments in the surrounding areas. Families who had previously arrived as refugees had typically been settled in other parts of the city. The expansion of new subdivisions opened up more rental property and less expensive housing in the established area near the school where I worked. Along with refugee youth who arrived with strong first language educational and literacy experiences, there was an increased enrolment of students arriving from developing countries, including those with protracted experiences in refugee camps. Within this latter group were youth who had suffered great hardships with only minimal opportunities for education. Adjusting to running water, electric lights, and appliances added to the stress of adapting to ubiquitous, culturally-different laws, regulations, and behavioural expectations. With few appropriate academic options available for students with developing literacy skills, youth with little first language education were placed in EAL classes with youth who had strong academic backgrounds.

Despite the rapid growth of the EAL population in Saskatchewan, the infrastructure to support refugee and immigrant students was not developing at an equal rate. It was difficult to advocate for additional funding for educational programs because provincial statistics regarding early school leaving were non-existent. Although increased provincial and federal dollars led to newly-developed summer and after-school programs – organized by settlement agencies – the

enrolment quotas were quickly filled, leaving many other youth without structured activities and social support. Programs to help adults and youth deal with the emotional aftermath of pre-migration trauma were begun by a settlement agency for women and a family counselling agency. Several years later, a primary settlement agency hired a part-time trauma counsellor, yet most youth were left without interventions. Pre-service teachers from the University of Saskatchewan visited our classrooms, eager to learn about teaching EAL, but until the fall of 2011, there were few credit classes related to teaching EAL available in the College of Education course offerings.

Prior to 2010, the plight of refugee and immigrant youth attracted minimal attention from Saskatchewan academics (see Carlson Berg, 2010; Chirkov, 2008; Grant, 2007; McMullen, 2009; Ward & Wason-Ellam, 1995; Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001). Meanwhile, research in Alberta and Manitoba flourished (see Hébert & Wilkinson, 2002; Hébert et al., 2008; Roessingh, 1995; Van Ngo, 2008). I returned to university with the hope of making a contribution to the dearth of knowledge in the theoretical and applied aspects of teaching secondary students who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration.

1.2 Entering the Culture of Graduate Studies

Returning to university provided myriad academic learning opportunities as well as personal experiences that caused me to reflect on the unsettling nature of coping in a new and unfamiliar culture. In some ways, my immersion in the culture of graduate school mirrored the stages of adjustment experienced by immigrants and refugees (Markovizky & Samid, 2008). I moved from the initial honeymoon phase, feeling thrilled to be a student, to a place of discomfort in the new environment, where I felt incompetent and lost. Without fully adjusting to the life of a full-time graduate student, I finished my course work and returned to my role as a secondary

school EAL teacher and experienced a type of culture shock. Our student enrolment had continued to grow, and the demands were greater than when I had left the previous year.

For the next four years, I alternated between the culture of teaching and the culture of graduate studies, and I was unable to completely settle and become a citizen of either world. In an effort to reframe the challenge as an opportunity, I became more empathic to the circumstances of youth who are constantly in transit. This is but one of the important lessons from my journey.

I came to realize that an interdisciplinary path to exploration was necessary. Addressing the educational and psychological needs of youth new to Canada requires examination of the societal challenges and supports that influence students' capacity to learn and adjust (Van Ngo & Schleifer, 2005). By taking the interdisciplinary road, I had many opportunities to deviate from the well-worn path of inquiries into teaching English skills and instead concentrate on how and why we learn. In classes on culture and human development, I learned that culture influences how we make sense of the world, dictates the everyday practices of our lives, and creates methods of healing that often seem nonsensical to those with different world views (Ingleby & Watters, 2002; James, 2001; Nadeau, & Measham, 2006; Rogoff, 2003).

With the guidance of a well-travelled sage from the College of Education, I pondered methods of engaging literacy learners as an act of social justice (Bruner, 1996; Haas Dyson, 1994; Veeman, Ward, & Walker, 2006). Indulging myself with a side trip to the University of Calgary, I took an independent studies class to investigate the direct connection between youths' loss of trust and experiences of trauma (Pipher, 2002; Watson, 2003). The most difficult *bend in the road* occurred as I attempted to understand more about the uncomfortable ways in which societal stances on race and racism sustain the language, education, and social policies of

present-day society (Denis, 1999; Henry & Tater, 1999). My concern deepened when I learned that “[d]espite many small-scale innovative projects, little is known, either in theory or in practice, about the types of activity that may work best for children from different cultural backgrounds” (Rousseau & Guzder, 2008, p. 534). These findings strengthen my resolve to learn more about the needs of youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees.

Fortunately, there was a positive breakthrough on the journey. I learned that researchers devoted to anti-oppression education posit that it is possible to use action research when the goals of education, developing agency, and taking action are equally as important as collecting data (Fals-Borda & Anusur Rahman, 1991). As well, I learned that the personal need for agency is powerful and persists throughout life (Johnston, 2004; Seligman, 1995). Each learning experience made me question and re-evaluate my pre-graduate school understanding of the needs of newcomer youth, but I emerged from the challenging trek with a strengthened ontological, epistemological, and theoretical positioning, which I outline in the next section.

1.3 The Journey Transforms the Traveler: My Theoretical Stance

Since my primary method of information collection for this dissertation was Photovoice (which I describe in Chapter Three), it is logical that I introduce my philosophical and theoretical stance with a visual representation. The photograph of a bookshelf full of beloved objects, photographs, and cards is, in many ways, a metaphor for my life. To an outsider, the shelf, like my life, may appear unorganized and without focus, but to me the randomness represents freedom and unrestricted opportunities to explore. The absence of rules eliminates the fear of failure as I explore and strive to find the right balance of social and educational demands. Within the chaos there is order, yet enough flexibility to accommodate the steady stream of new

arrivals to the classroom and this bookshelf. The contents of the shelf symbolize aspects of my philosophical stance.



Figure 1.1. A symbolic representation of my philosophical stance

Objects from my international travels represent an awakening that led me to re-examine concepts of *otherness*, my understanding of racism, and my position of unearned privilege (Wise, 2010). Now, I am ever mindful of the colonizing effect of language teaching, interrogate my perspectives, and remain cognizant that I am in a culture of domination and a position of power (hooks, 2004). As a result, theories of anti-oppressive education are guiding principles in my daily work with students. In an attempt to be a culturally responsive teacher-researcher (Villegas & Lucas, 2002), I strive to move away from the *deficit model*. Rather than focusing on what

learners cannot do or do not know, I use the students' individual and cultural resources to build bridges between what they know and what they need to learn (Freire, 2001).

By beginning with what students know, I become the learner as described by Smith (2001) in her use of institutional ethnography “to create a sociology *for* rather than *of* people that can expand the scope of our knowledge of what we are part of but cannot apprehend directly” (p. 161). I work to incorporate the voice of youth because “throughout history, the marginalization and exclusion of the underprivileged . . . is evident. Academically, these groups have been silenced, misrepresented, or absent in the production and dissemination of authoritative knowledge” (Wright, 2003, p. 243). The vastly different experiences of those who have been forced to migrate create valuable perceptions that are often far different from my epistemological stance.

As a constructionist, I believe that the “cultures and sub-cultures into which we are born provide us with meanings [that] shape our thinking and behaviour throughout our lives” (Crotty, 1998, p. 79). This perspective is represented by a bewildering present I received from a student. Because I had no cultural reference for this object, I could not identify it. The object held no meaning for me until the student provided an explanation. This previously puzzling gift is a visual prompt that reminds me that in my work with students from a variety of backgrounds, it is essential to acknowledge that culture constructs reality (de Levita, 2000; Kristal-Andersson, 2001; Marsella et al., 2008). In my on-going role as an adult ally of youth who have experienced forced migration, a constructionist stance allows me to acknowledge that trauma is a reality that causes great suffering, yet the symptoms can have different meanings in other cultures. As a researcher, being aware of the cultural relativity of the concepts of trauma and wellbeing helps

me avoid taking only a Western perspective that silences culturally different epistemologies regarding what is important (Bracken & Petty, 1998; Young, 1995).

The objects I received as gifts are symbolic of the close relationship that often develops between EAL teachers and their students, and action researchers and their participants. I am comfortable disclosing that I am emotionally connected to what I am seeking to know and understand because as a constructionist and a passionate scholar, I am not required to remain neutral and distanced from the student participants (Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2000). A constructionist stance also allows me, as a researcher, to move beyond isolated psychological and societal influences because constructionists posit that “[e]xplanations are to be found neither in the individual psyche nor in social structures, but in the interactive processes that take place routinely between people” (Burr, 1995, p. 7). It is therefore appropriate to consider the intertwined and often overlapping sociological, emotional, and educational needs of a diverse student population living in a multicultural society.

My adoration of Canada’s cultural richness is encapsulated by my menagerie of gifts from around the world. The great diversity of objects demonstrates that “[a]s social beings, humans are never devoid of values” (Jessen Williamson, 2006). The gifts we give and the objects we cherish are tangible examples of the multiplicity of underlying value systems that guide our everyday practices. Closer inspection of the multicultural trinkets reveals the numerous similarities that transcend ethnicity, religion, or gender, however. Two decades of work with newcomers has shown me that there are more similarities than differences across cultures. For example, love for family is universal (McAdam-Crisp, 2006). My family has greatly contributed to the development of my theoretic al stance.

In the centre of the collection of objects are photos of my family members – some biological, others borrowed. My definition of kin has expanded to include the borrowed or surrogate family members who are sources of great support to me. How fortunate I am to have the International Women of Saskatoon as my *sisters* and a darling *granddaughter* whose courageous mother escaped her country as an unaccompanied minor. All are constant reminders to value loved ones, wellbeing, and safety from famine, war, and persecution. Most importantly, my family keeps me grounded when I stray from the key aspects of life.

In addition to family, co-workers play an essential role in my life. The bookshelf, which holds these photos and objects, was given to me by a retired colleague, and represents several significant aspects of my life. The shelf denotes the support and wisdom passed down from those more experienced than I, first as I began my English language teaching career, and later as I explored the influence of trauma on learning. When research and literature focusing on students with interrupted education were scarce (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2007; Halcón et al., 2004), the lived experience of professionals who worked closely with EAL youth provided a valuable foundation for my teaching and learning.

Just as the bookshelf holds each precious object and its respective story, I, as an adult ally, hold the stories of youth struggling to adjust to life in Canada. As a teacher, I am not trained to take the role of counsellor, yet what I do can be healing (Piper, 2002). As I learned from Doctors Jaswant Guzder and Cecile Rousseau at the University of McGill's summer institute, I can hold a student's story and offer some relief from the burden. There are occasions, however, when I, like the rickety shelf, reach the capacity to hold and support. After reinforcement from family, friends, and students – followed by a little reorganization, I can cope with more challenges.

All aspects of my personal and professional life played a significant role in shaping my passion for learning and devotion to social justice. My perspectives evolved as I learned and gained a better understanding of the multi-faceted and complicated issues that influence youths' capacity to adjust to life in Canada. I learned that a social justice perspective does not consider factors such as "hunger, racism, violence, serious illness or disability, inability to speak English or French as a first language, and other circumstances strictly in terms of disadvantage status; rather its concern is to locate and transform the sources of inequality" (Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001, p. 331). These issues at the intersection of education, psychology and sociology are outlined in the next chapter, which is a review of the literature that is most pertinent to my understanding of aspects of risk, resilience, and change among newcomer youth who enter one of Canada's educational systems.

Chapter Two

Risk, Resilience, and Change: Literature Review

Because youths' adjustment to life in Canada is a complex mix of academic, emotional, and social needs, I have developed the literature review around three major themes. First, I present literature related to factors that increase the accumulation of risk for youth who arrive in Canada as refugees and immigrants. Accumulation of risk is a term used by Garbario and Kostelney (1996) to make clear that young people can cope with some negative stressors, but numerous and overwhelming negative experiences reduce youths' capacity to live well. Therefore, the subsections outline the educational, emotional, and social risk factors in both pre- and post-migration contexts. Risk factors include but are not limited to pre-migration trauma (Nadeau & Measham, 2006; Pipher, 2002); rejection of the new culture (Greenfield, Daniel, & Harnden, 2010); doing poorly on tests and written assignments and dropping out of school early (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002); and becoming involved in illicit activity (Bruner, 1996).

Following this, I review the literature regarding the aspects that buffer risk and foster resilience. Resilience is a term referring to the factors which enable a person to cope with adversity. It is a generic concept that cannot easily be measured because it is dependent on a person's personal qualities, environment, and history. It is also a value statement because resilience is based on socially acceptable ways of coping (Barnard, Morland, & Nagy, 1999). The subsections include educational supports, social supports, and personal attributes.

The third section addresses the use of storytelling for literacy development and emotional wellbeing (Freeman et al., 2002; Haas Dyson, 1994; Heath, 1994; Klinger, 2010; Miller & Mehler, 1994). In order to provide a balanced portrayal of refugee and immigrant youths' lives,

I will demonstrate that it is necessary to address the literature related to both risk and resilience in pre- and post-migration environments, and the power of narrative in literacy learning and personal wellbeing.

2.1 Factors that Increase the Accumulation of Risk

Forced migration is “a general term that refers to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people (those displaced by conflicts within their country of origin) as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects” (Retrieved from <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/hs/pubhealth/modules/forcedMigration/definitions.html>). The predominant concerns for youth who have experienced forced migration can be divided into three subsections: educational, emotional, and social risk factors. It can be hypothesized that the consequences of accumulated risk are common to youth across cultures. When adolescents present with a combination of limited first language education, high acculturation needs, and few social supports, they are placed in a very vulnerable position and become susceptible to negative outside influences and high risk behaviours such as substance abuse and illicit activity (Short & Boyson, 2012).

Educational risk factors include undeveloped literacy skills and early school leaving (Phan, 2002; Pirbhai-Illich, 2005; Rousseau & Guzder, 2008; Short & Boyson, 2012; Watt & Roessingh, 2001). Emotional risk factors consist of experiences of pre-migration trauma, which lead to difficulty trusting and making attachments (Nadeau & Measham, 2006; Pipher, 2002), and struggles with identity (Grant, 2007; Suárez-Orozco, 2000; Yu et al., 2007). Social risk factors are isolation and a small social network (Beiser, 1999; McColl, McKenzie & Bhui, 2008); remaining unconnected to support services in the community (United Nations Association

in Canada, 2007); and involvement with the justice system (Chettleburgh, 2007; Van Ngo & Schleifer, 2005).

2.1.1 Educational Risk Factors

Acquiring an education is a primary challenge for youth who arrive in Canada after experiencing interrupted education and forced migration. The literature related to research in the area of teaching English as an additional language (EAL) highlights challenges in three specific areas. First, the time needed to acquire sufficient academic English is curtailed by the mandatory exit age for secondary education (Elliot, 2011) which varies from province to province. This is particularly cogent for youth who arrive with very limited first language academic training, which include youth who have first language vocational school training (NGO Network of Integration Focal Points, 2006), youth who have protracted refugee camp experience (Collier, 2004; Cornell & Hartman, 2007), and girls from cultures where female education is not a priority (Kristof & WuDunn, 2009). Additional challenges are created by family dynamics and the paucity of school resources.

When parents are unable or unavailable to be involved in educational matters, children are at a disadvantage (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Youth who often carry a large portion of the family's financial responsibility have less time to develop academic and English skills (Advocates for Children of New York, 2010). Third, newcomer students are placed in classes where teachers do not have the training and experience to deal with diverse needs (Pipher, 2002; Rousseau & Guzder, 2008; Szente, Hoot, & Taylor, 2006). In this section, I present the literature to illustrate that youth who arrive with limited first-language academic instruction and students who take on adult roles in Canada need additional educational time and specialized support in order to graduate from secondary school and integrate into society.

Because “it takes from two to nine years to achieve academic norms in the second language that are consistent with the students' age and level” (Helmer & Eddy, 1996, p. 77), middle school EAL students often feel a time pressure to learn English that will be sufficient for secondary school success (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, n.d.). This stress is amplified by the risk factors created by interrupted education and forced migration. A recent study conducted by Dr. Miles Corak at the University of Ottawa (as cited in Elliot, 2011), presents a dramatic scenario. Corak (2011) states that children who arrive over the age of nine do not fare well at school and are more likely to drop out; rates of early school leaving increase by “one or two percentage points for every year after the age of nine, reaching as high as one in five for kids who come here in the high school years” (p. 1). More specifically, when youth arrive as older adolescents with limited first language education, there is not sufficient time to gain language and academic skills before the mandatory exit age. Academic advancement is further hindered when there is a mismatch between youths’ prior learning and the skills required in a Canadian school setting.

Successful transition to the Canadian education system is difficult if students’ previous experiences are not recognized (Madibbo, 2008; NGO Network of Integration Focal Points, 2006), or youth have not had the opportunity to gain the skills and knowledge highly valued in Canadian schools (Cornell & Hartman, 2007). Poor academic performance and frustration occur when youth are assigned to grades according to age and not according to academic ability (Kanu, 2009). Two first-language education scenarios that make adjustment to Canadian school life very challenging are technical high school experiences and protracted refugee camp life.

The standards of vocational track education vary greatly across the European Union. In Switzerland, the vocational education system successfully prepares youth for middle class

employment by providing students paid career training as well as in-class instruction. The program is not designed to segregate students with limited academic ability but rather to enhance workplace skills for all students (Hoffman, 2011). Meanwhile, in Hungary, where there is disparagement of minorities, the most disadvantaged youth are steered toward vocational training (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2001). In Germany, “pupils with migration background are highly over-represented in lower-level schools, diminishing their chances to get an apprenticeship placement after school and then a job” (NGO Network of Integration Focal Points, 2006, p. 25). Vocational training with minimal academic expectations resulting from youth being tracked due to race and class perpetuates social imbalance (Rubin, 2008, p. 90). The social inequities continue in Canada if youths’ vocational training does not provide the academic credits needed for graduation.

Youth who experienced low academic vocational training prior to arriving in Canada have great difficulty making the transition to Saskatchewan high school where grade 11 mathematics and two grade 12 English credits are required for graduation. Without extended time and specific programs in which to acquire the necessary academic skills, the educational inequities continue after migration, and youth are at risk for early school leaving. The second scenario that places youth at a high risk of school drop out is protracted or extended refugee camp experience (Gunderson, 2012).

Youth who have spent a high proportion of their lives in refugee camps do not have what Cornell and Hartman (2007) refer to as human capital or the “knowledge and abilities people acquire through formal and informal education, training, and experience” (p. 234). Having the skills highly valued in the Canadian workplace or educational setting is like currency because it gives students access to the benefits of those institutions. For example, students who are familiar

with Western education systems will have more capacity to be academically successful. Conversely, students who do not understand the rules and behavioural expectations of an institution face additional barriers to success at school and work. The acquisition of such skills requires direct instruction, a great deal of explanation, and repetition. As a result, students require extended periods of time to gain knowledge of the culture and behavioural expectations of school before moving on to academic learning (Collier, 2004). Students' learning opportunities are adversely affected if specific programs are not available to assist youth in gaining such proficiencies. Unfortunately, typical literacy activities with workbooks and novels "are excellent preparation for higher education, but seldom transfer into real life literacy solutions" (Veeman et al., 2006, p. 22). For girls born into cultures where education for females is not a priority, the educational gaps are more profound.

Around the world, oppression and exploitation of women takes many forms. Forced marriages, genital mutilation, prostitution, sweatshop labour, and modern slavery are a result of women being denied education, economic power, and social status (Kristof & WuDunn, 2009; Malarek, 2003). Immigrant and refugee women and girls are not instantly empowered upon arrival in a new country (Wills, 2007). The disparity in first-language educational experiences between males and females has a lasting influence on girls' capacity to adjust to life in Canada. Most notably is the challenge of being academically successful when girls have received less education than their brothers and male counterparts (Hirshi Ali, 2007). Supporting women to be academically and economically independent benefits their children and the development of society in general (Yunus, 2007), yet there are no specific programs in Saskatchewan schools to meet the needs of immigrant and refugee girls with little or no first language education.

The second issue to add to the accumulation of academic risk for immigrant and refugee youth is their family situation in Canada. The topics of concern for this study are parents' challenges to involvement in their children's education and families' dependence on youth employment, which adversely affects school success. Children benefit from their parents being active participants in their education (DuFour & Eaker, 1998), but for many immigrant and refugee parents, involvement in school activities is challenging. Even when parents have high academic expectations for their children, "their own integration and survival challenges leave them ill-equipped to provide the support needed by their children to succeed in school" (Kanu, 2009, p. 116). Work and language class schedules, language barriers, and unfamiliarity with the school system limit parents' participation in their children's education. For parents with limited first language education, school can be an intimidating and confusing environment (Louie, 2008; Szente, Hoot, & Taylor, 2006). Conditions that add to the accumulation of educational risk for youth are single parent families without adequate support, families in conflict, and youth arriving unaccompanied (Tartakovsky, 2011). When youth take on financial responsibilities for the family, educational success is jeopardized.

Immigrant and refugee youth often make large contributions to family income, which takes precious time away from studies. Youth are caught in a paradox. The need to work adversely affects the ability to do well at school because: "[b]alancing eight hours of work each day with academic work [is] almost impossible" (Kanu, 2009, p. 116). As a result, many youth do not gain the literacy skills needed to move beyond survival existence employment (Pirbhai-Illich, 2005; Watt & Roessingh, 2001). By sacrificing their studies, youth are destined to entry-level, low-paying jobs since finding adequate employment in Canada is extremely difficult without secondary school English competency (Chettleburgh, 2007).

The third issue to add to immigrant and refugee youths' accumulation of education risk is that not all teachers have the capacity to deal with immigrant and refugee youth who have high academic needs. When provincial education funding formulas do not take into account the rapid increase in newcomer enrolment, the result is staffing and resource shortages as well as "a limited supply of EAL educators" (Bucklaschuk, Moss, & Annis, 2009, p. 67). Children and youth with high emotional, educational, and family needs are placed in classrooms where teachers do not have the training to offer the required support (Barnard et al., 1999; Pipher, 2002; Rousseau & Guzder, 2008; Szente, Hoot, & Taylor, 2006).

Without adequate training to meet the needs of culturally diverse students with high academic needs, teachers place the responsibility for student success and failure on students and their families (Diamond, 2008). "[T]he language of risk can serve as a euphemism for racism, sexism, and biases based on factors like class and regional inequalities, thereby shifting attention away from more enduring problems" (Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001, p. 331). Rather than making adjustments to educational programs to support students, well-meaning adults attempt to protect those who are vulnerable by creating policies of policing and surveillance (Gleason, Myers, Paris, & Strong-Boag, 2010). As a result, EAL students with high needs have little support, yet the pressure to finish secondary school, become gainfully employed, and help family members reach a higher level of social status, weighs heavily on youth. Therefore, when older students arrive with additional academic needs and social challenges, educational success beyond grade eight is drastically curtailed (Advocates for Children of New York, 2010).

In summary, when youth arrive in Canada, the level of English proficiency is a primary factor that determines the opportunities for academic and social success. The potential for early school leaving becomes more acute for youth who have had little formal education in their

country of origin or refuge. Girls, who have not been given the educational opportunities, require enhanced academic support. Youth who have protracted refugee camp experience require additional, quality time in school with direct instruction to acquire knowledge of Canadian culture, behavioural expectations, and skills, so they can fully participate in academics and employment. Teachers require specific training to meet the needs of youth from diverse cultural backgrounds and educational experiences. Such educational challenges are the first of three primary risk factors outlined in the literature related to refugee and immigrant youth. The second set of challenges is subsumed under the heading of emotional risk factors.

2.1.2 Emotional Risk Factors

“Even under the best of circumstances, adolescents travel an exquisitely poignant journey through difficult developmental terrain . . . [and when] the ordinary stresses of adolescence are overlaid with extraordinary additional stresses, there emerge important risk factors for healthy development” (Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, & Kilkenny, 2002, p. 249). Four areas of concern outlined in the literature related to the emotional risk factors for youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees include (a) struggles with identity (Brown & Girard, 2007; Grant, 2007), (b) being caught between the culture of home and school (Suárez-Orozco, 2000), (c) being subjected to pre-migration trauma which leads to difficulty trusting and making attachments (Galler & Sher, 2010; Nadeau & Measham, 2006; Pipher, 2002) and (d) undeveloped infrastructure to support culturally-different perspectives on emotional wellbeing (Rousseau, Lacroix, Singh, Gauthier, & Benoit, 2005; White, Tutt, Rude, & Mutwiri, 2001). The addition of emotional risk factors to the previously described educational challenges places immigrant and refugee youth in an increasingly vulnerable position and reduces the capacity to successfully integrate into Canadian society.

The influence of forced migration and resettlement on the identities of youth is “a complex and multifaceted psychosocial process with significant and lasting effects” (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1052). From a constructionist approach, identity is understood as the meaning asserted from within groups and assigned from those outside the group in circumstances that result in identities being “built, rebuilt, and sometimes dismantled over time” (Cornell & Hartman, 2007). In addition, the social construction of race and ethnicity intersects with factors such as class, gender, and age in complex and dynamic productions of identity (James, 2001). Cultural expectations and norms have an immense influence on the development of identity by prescribing stages of human development, behaviour, and ways of thinking about the world (Rogoff, 2003). Consequently, immigrant and refugee youth are in a particularly tenuous position because they are often caught between the values of school culture and parents’ expectations (Brown & Girard, 2007; Rousseau et al., 2004).

Developing maturity and taking on responsibilities is a typical process for youth in mainstream culture as well as for youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees. Youth living between cultures have additional pressures, however. The work of Suárez-Orozco (2000) illustrates how the dissonance between the new culture and home culture can cause youth identity confusion. The author describes how youth may reject their home culture while striving to become integrated into the dominant culture. This may cause youth to devalue their parents’ authority and even feel shame for less-adapted parents. Conversely, youth who feel discarded by school and the economy may reject the majority culture. A further cause for concern is that a fragmented sense of identity may leave youth susceptible to negative influences such as involvement in illicit activity or substance abuse (Cote, Levine, & Erikson as cited in Schwartz,

Pantin, Prado, Sullivan, & Szapocznik, 2005). Risk accumulates when youth have also experienced traumatic events.

This is particularly true for immigrant as well as refugee youth who have witnessed, experienced, or heard of acts of violence and forced migration. Youth can be indirectly affected by the torture of a significant family or community member and “any degree of involvement should be cause for concern” (Green, 2007, p. 269). When constantly anticipating danger, students are unable to learn, practice new skills, or have fun (Barnard et al., 1999; Silver Spring, 2005) because a sense of safety is necessary to gain new skills and knowledge (Kohn, 2006). Most importantly, the capacity to trust has been compromised when the adults entrusted with keeping youth safe fail to do so (Harden, 2012; Pipher, 2002). Without trust, youth have difficulty self-identifying when asked about personal needs (Feldmann et al., 2007; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). Consequently, it takes a great deal of time to learn to trust teachers, respect rules, and take academic risks (Watson, 2003), and the resulting behaviours may be misinterpreted by peers and adults who do not understand the influence of trauma.

Trauma is “the effects of external events impinging on the individual – events that are beyond the usual expectation of what life should be” (Apfel & Simon, 1996, p. 6). “From a neurodevelopmental perspective, trauma is not the event – it is the individual’s response to the event. Traumatic stress occurs when an extreme experience overwhelms and alters the individual’s stress-related physiological systems” (Ungar & Perry, 2012, p. 7). Children who are unable to articulate their experiences show fear through repetitive and aggressive play. Such behaviour invites disciplinary action by teachers and social ostracism by peers, which can hurt a child's social development (Aaroyo & Eth, 1996). Youth who try to regain a sense of control by becoming aggressive or violent are further alienated in their educational institutions and society

in general (Marans et al., 1996). For other youth, efforts to learn English and blend into North American society conceal post-traumatic symptoms, which might resurface later (Owen & English, 2005). When families and teachers search for professional mental health supports to help guide youth through such challenging circumstances, additional barriers to finding culturally appropriate services arise. As a result, needs go unmet.

Around the world, there are great disparities in the use of mental health services by multicultural minorities, compared to the dominant population (Norris & Alegría, 2008). “Most refugees, immigrants, and their children do not seek psychological support prior to finding themselves in deep or acute crisis. Those who receive psychotherapy, mental-health care, and other support seldom stay on to complete it” (Kristal-Andersson, 2001, p. 16). Newcomers who have experienced organized violence avoid mental health services because the services are not always culturally sensitive (Rousseau, Lacroix, Singh, Gauthier, & Benoit, 2005; White, Tutt, Rude, & Mutwiri, 2001). Currently, counselling methods in Canada are largely based on a Western bio-medical approach because Euro-Canadians have formed the dominant culture.

The power of the dominant culture results in social policies that “endorse their system of beliefs, lifestyle, and cultural traditions, while, by the same process, the status of others is diminished” (Breton, 1999, p. 297). For example, the debate regarding depression as a culturally relative and ethnocentric concept is ongoing. As Beiser (1999) clarifies, “Culture did not create the symptom pattern: it created its definition. Culture also affects packaging” (p. 70). Packaging is the way in which people learn to express their states of health in a culturally appropriate manner.

Cultures determine how reality is codified in language and images (Marsella et al., 2008). Religious and cultural beliefs set standards for what is permissible to speak about and define the

consequences for not following the standards (Green, 2007). Pipher (2002) explains that emotional pain in many cultures is commonly expressed somatically, and the Western mental health system that requires verbalization and self-disclosure “splits the personal and the professional, the sacred and profane, and the mind and the body” (p. 282). Besides affecting the expression of trauma, world view also affects ways of healing or becoming well.

Comparisons are often drawn between individual- and community-oriented cultures. Unlike Western values based on individualism, “[s]hamanistic cultures view illness and trauma as a problem for the entire community, not just for the individual or individuals who manifest the symptoms” (Levine, 1997, p. 57). The difference between individual- and community-oriented cultures also influences where people seek help. While people with an individualistic orientation may prefer the emotional distance of Western-style counselling, community-oriented people may prefer to go to family members, elders, community leaders or religious healers (Arthur & Merali, 2004). Many cultures do not accept direct disclosure of trauma, depression or mental illness (Lewis, 1961), but instead follow customs regarding the use of euphemistic speaking or idioms of distress.

“Symbolic associations, habits and traditions arising from culture as well as contextual factors and personal inclinations” influence the idioms used to express feelings (Fernando, 2009, p. 1). In some cultures, people with mental disturbances are said to be close to God; in other cultures the same condition could be described as possession by the devil or evil spirits (Kristal-Andersson, 2001). Idioms of distress provide a way of describing discomfort that is “intelligible within the individual’s social milieu” (Kirmayer & Young, 1998, p. 424). Watters (2010) summarizes:

A Nigerian man might experience a culturally distinct form of depression by describing a peppery feeling in his head. A rural Chinese farmer might speak only of shoulder or stomach aches. A man from India might talk of semen loss or a sinking heart or feeling hot. A Korean might tell you of “fire illness,” which is experienced as a burning in the gut. Someone from Iran might talk of tightness in the chest, and an American Indian might describe the experience of depression as something akin to loneliness. (p. 193)

Conversely, North American counselling methods, based on the work of Freud, encourage complete disclosure typically conducted with a neutral, emotionally-unattached professional (Watters, 2010).

The cultural stigma associated with mental health and the paucity of appropriate services force newcomers to turn to the people and institutions with which they feel most comfortable. White (2007) explains that newcomers seek help from the settlement agencies where most staff do not have professional training in counselling. As well, specific, grant-based programs offering culturally-sensitive counselling for war-related trauma are short term. Parents who are not culturally familiar with children receiving counselling continue to rely on teachers for advice (Szente, Hoot, & Taylor, 2006). Consequently, teachers often become the trusted confidants of youth and families with high emotional needs (Pipher, 2002).

Whether youth arrive in Canada as immigrants or refugees, there are numerous emotional factors that place young people at risk. Identity confusion is common to all youth who relocate, but for some, the change is made more difficult as a result of conflict between the values and beliefs of home and school. Typical challenges caused by the move from childhood to adolescence and by relocation are further exacerbated by experiences of pre-migration trauma. Limited English facility, loss of trust, and culturally-different views of mental health make the

expression of needs very difficult for youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees. When families and teachers search for professional health care for youth, it is often difficult to find culturally appropriate care. Consequently, teachers become emotional supports and surrogate counsellors for immigrant and refugee youth with emotional challenges. The stresses of educational and emotional ordeals are further compounded by social risk factors.

2.1.3 Social Risk Factors

The third set of risk factors that increase the accumulation of risk are pre- and post-migration social experiences that adversely affect newcomer youth's capacity to integrate into Canadian society. It is necessary to recognize that both refugee and immigrant youth can undergo harmful pre-migration social incidents that result in forced migration (Rousseau & Guzder, 2008; White, 2007). Secondly, it is pertinent to consider the negative post-migration social factors on the wellbeing and successful integration of newcomers (Beiser, 1999; McColl et al., 2008). It is of utmost importance to ponder the potential consequences of youth being made vulnerable by negative educational, emotional, and social experiences both prior to and after migration. This is the lure of illicit and gang activity (Chettleburgh, 2007; Van Ngo & Schleifer, 2005). Finally, the often-overlooked intersectionality of gender, oppression, and risk must be addressed (Stasiulis, 1999; VanBergen & Saharso, 2010). When considering the factors that reduce youths' capacity to thrive, it is necessary to take into account the reasons for migration as well as post-migration challenges (Van Ngo, 2010; Wilkinson, 2008).

The social conditions that lead to migration are important considerations when determining the social risk factors of youth new to Canada. Compared to refugees, immigrants are perceived as freely and eagerly choosing to relocate. For the majority of recent immigrants from developing countries, however, the choice to leave is not completely voluntary because it is

caused by persecution, poverty, and social insecurity (Rousseau & Guzder, 2008; White, 2007). Kamphoefner (as cited in Cornell & Hartmann, 2007) distinguishes between the “*pull* of economic or social opportunity in the receiving society [and the] *push* of economic disaster or political persecution in the sending society” (p. 232). Relocation, for any reason, comes at a cost. Whether relocation is undertaken voluntarily or by force, youth are separated from the family members and friends who offer social capital.

The term social capital for the purposes of this dissertation is defined as people’s connections or social networks (Putnam, 2000). The connection between accumulation of social capital and newcomers’ capacity to adjust to a new educational system is of particular interest (see Marjoribanks & Kwok, 1998). Bonding social capital is understood as the close relationships with people inside a group, cultural community or family while bridging social capital describes alliances with people outside a person’s usual social group. Bonding social capital provides the emotional support to cope with the myriad difficulties of migration as well as the typical challenges of childhood and youth. After resettlement, youth search for peer support and acceptance in society (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). Teens are social persons by nature who “want to chat, communicate and relate to others, especially others who are just like them or allow them to feel like they belong” (TheTeenDoc.com, 2011). However, cultural differences and misunderstandings create barriers to developing ties with Canadians and other newcomers. Having small social networks and remaining unconnected to school and community activities results in youth feeling bored, lonely, and often unwelcome (McColl et al., 2008).

While bonding social capital can be supplied by family members and one’s ethnic community, it tends to be exclusive by nature. Without moving beyond this realm, newcomers do not develop “weak ties” (Putnam, 2000) which put people in touch with those who can

provide social connections in the larger community. Consequently, immigrant and refugee youth often experience isolation that negatively influences the capacity to integrate into Canadian society (Hogarth as cited in Van Ngo, 2010). Remaining unconnected to community supports is one of the major barriers to refugee and immigrant wellbeing (The United Nations Association in Canada, 2007). In fact, the importance of social connections cannot be underestimated. With the understanding that the previous experiences of migrants cannot be changed, but the post-migration challenges can be mitigated, the Refugee Resettlement Project (RRP) emphasizes the impact of “contemporaneous challenge over past vicissitude” (Beiser, 1999, p. 62) to negatively impact the wellbeing of newcomers to Canada. Furthermore, people look elsewhere for acceptance when they do not feel wanted or appreciated (Ujimoto, 1999).

Feeling socially isolated can lead youth to “construct spaces of competence in the underground and alternative economies,” (Suárez-Orozco, 2000, p. 219), including gang activity. Pre-migration violence and persecution combined with post-migration disillusionment due to poverty and isolation result in youth being vulnerable to the lure of countercultures and gang activity (Bruner, 1996). Children and youth who are not offered a framework from which to process their experiences “are likely to be drawn to groups and ideologies that legitimize and reward their rage, fear, and hateful cynicism” (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1996, p. 47). Gangs offer a sense of belonging, social activities, and employment opportunities.

In the August 27th, 2007 issue of *Maclean's* magazine, MacDonald (2007) reports that the gang named Mad Cowz “began targeting and recruiting youth from Winnipeg’s refugee and immigrant community,” (p. 20) who MacDonald describes as “displaced youth who have been exposed to a high degree of violence” (p. 20). In MacDonald’s (2007) interview with an incarcerated gang member, she learns that gangs recruit immigrants and refugees by watching for

disillusioned youth and selling them dreams of prosperity and happiness. Although financial stability may be seen as the antidote to illicit activity, simply providing jobs is not enough to help marginalized people feel like valued members of society. Former gang members can be drawn back to the groups that offer the sense of belonging mainstream society does not (Bascunán & Pearce, 2007). Typically, such discussions regarding the interconnectedness of poverty, racism, early school leaving, and gang activity are synonymous with males, while the intersection of risk factors with the oppression of women is neglected.

Stasiulis (1999) uses feminist intersectional theorizing to explain that race, gender, and class are not discrete categories. If only one factor, for example racism, is used to analyze the plight of newcomers, the distinct result of intersecting factors is not accurately depicted. Researchers who recognize the social reality of women who are simultaneously oppressed by race, class and gender avoid taking a reductive stance that focuses on one form of power. Consideration for cultural influences on social hierarchies is critical to intersectional theorizing, yet at the same time it is problematic to avert a cultural relativist position. Alternatively, a relational concept of culture highlights the “complex set of social relations that overlaps, fuses, and intersects with other relations of power within and across various communal and geopolitical borders” (Stasiulis, 1999, p. 378). Theories of intersectionality are, therefore, most appropriate to studies involving youth from a variety of cultures, who have diverse first language and migration experiences, and who have various levels of oppression due to race, class, and gender.

To conclude, the literature shows that youth who arrive as immigrants or refugees face many educational, emotional, and social challenges that add to the accumulation of risk and negatively affect the capacity to integrate into society. Interrupted education and pre-migration experiences of trauma exacerbate challenges to learn a new language, transform identities in a

new culture, and make new friends in a seemingly unwelcoming environment. Family pressures caused by low income place youth in a precarious and vulnerable position to be drawn into illicit activity.

Despite these tremendous challenges, many youth are able to stay in school, develop a sense of emotional wellbeing, create a strong social network, and gain employment. Personal skills and attributes as well as family and social support help youth avoid illicit activity and other negative behaviours. The next section of the literature review outlines the factors that buffer risk and promote resilience for youth who arrive in Canada as immigrants and refugees.

2.2 Factors that Buffer Risk and Foster Resilience

A paradigm shift in research has resulted in discarding the previous view of forced migrants as victims and acknowledging that newcomers arrive with strengths, resilience, and the capacity to adapt to new situations and challenges (Feldmann et al, 2007). However, in order to avoid placing youth in a situation that requires unrealistic expectations, it is important to acknowledge that “[c]hildren are no more and no less resilient than adults. Some are more resilient than others. The same child may be resilient to one event but react quite differently to another” (Capewell, 1999, p. 31). “Resilience is a process that engages the biological, psychological and social resources individuals require to resist the negative impact of adversity, recover from exposure and the temporary decline in functioning that follow, or grow as a consequence of the experience” (Ungar & Perry, 2012, p. 10). Much can be learned from the resilience of Aboriginal people of Canada who have overcome discrimination, poverty, and traumatic residential school experiences (Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003). In this section, I review the literature with regard to the factors that buffer risk and foster resilience for youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees.

To begin with, the definition of resilience is explored in relation to children of diverse cultures. Next, protective factors are divided into three sections: (a) personality features and social skills; (b) family and friends; and (c) teachers and schools (Barnard et al., 1999). Even though youth who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration encounter numerous risk factors, many youth have cultural resources, personal attributes, and support systems that buffer risk and enhance resilience.

2.2.1 The Definition of Resilience across Cultures

When identifying protective factors, the influence of culture must be considered because the capacity to be resilient is not limited to individual strengths but rather to a complex matrix of family attributes, social supports, as well as cultural values and beliefs (Cameron, Fox, Anderson, & Cameron, 2010; Carswell & Carswell, 2008; Ungar, 2001; Ungar & Perry, 2012). The definition of resilience as a multidimensional construct is negotiated between individuals and their communities (Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001); previous research is typically embedded in Eurocentric epistemology, however. As a result, “[W]e do not yet know what resilience means to non-western populations and marginalized groups such as Aboriginal people who live side-by-side with their ‘mainstream’ neighbours in western settings” (Ungar, 2008, p. 219). Previous research with minority youth has focused on individual strengths without recognizing the complex nature of culture influence (Boyden & de Berry, 2004; Cameron, 2009; Cameron, Theron, Ungar, & Liebenberg, 2011). In order to move beyond a deficit model and understand the development of culturally-diverse people, it is important to take into account the social-cultural norms of children’s development (Chan & Simcisin, 2008; McAdam-Crisp, 2006), examine the meaning of behaviours and discard the belief that practices of mainstream society are best (Ko & Perreira, 2010; Rogoff, 2003). Acknowledging the importance of culturally

specific beliefs and practices is critically important in supporting the wellbeing of newcomers to Canada.

Cultures have protective factors and ways of promoting wellbeing and healing (Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003; Weerackody & Fernando, 2009), and cultural understanding shapes the way people respond to interventions (Dettlaff, Addams, Thomas, Cohen, & Buehler, 2008; Kristal-Andersson, 2001; Watters, 2010). Consequently, people are more open to Western medical procedures if traditional cultural practices are recognized and included (DeGagné, 2007). Traditional ways of healing found in the literature include maintaining a relationship with deceased ancestors (Bemak & Cheung, 2004; Wessells & Monterio, 2004); taking a community approach to counselling (Nash, Wong, & Trlin, 2006); using special teas and combinations of food, or consulting a herbalist (Tan, Ford-Jones, MacDonald, Mahoney, & Onyett, 1999); and exorcising djinns or evil spirits (Guzder, 2007). Other practices include family council meetings and consultations with transnational family networks (Nadeau & Measham, 2006); participation in drama and art (Hickling, 2007); as well as drumming and dance (Perry, 2012).

Studies regarding therapeutic meaning and practice for First Nations people of Canada report the benefits of using traditional healing activities for youth. An important factor highlighted by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation is that activities for healing can be both direct and indirect. The Foundation reports that “healing cannot always be emphasized, as this may limit the youths’ participation” (Waldram, 2008, p. 11). Assisting youth to build confidence and self-esteem through traditional activities is paramount. Traditional healing activities include sweat lodges, crafts, drumming and dance, talks by elders, nature walks, and storytelling. The success of activity-based programs is the connection with belief systems.

Belief systems that guide people through life play a major role in developing resilience. Religious ideologies and spirituality are critical factors of resilience (Garbarino as cited in McAdam-Crisp, 2006). Because people's search for meaning is an instinctual drive and a primary motivation in life (Frankl, 1992), spiritual values and beliefs offer explanations for events that are difficult to understand. Religious beliefs and customs offer solace even under extreme pressure and help people show patience for themselves and others (Abi-Hashem, 2008). Although it is important to generalize with caution (Norris & Alegría, 2008), there are common characteristics of resilient people across cultures.

2.2.2 Personality Features and Social Skills

For the purposes of this dissertation, I define *traits* as both the innate personal qualities with which people are born as well as the social skills people learn throughout life. The personality traits that buffer stressful situations include being hopeful and optimistic (Seligman, 1995), having high self-esteem, a strong personality, and a positive outlook regarding the ability of people to take control and overcome difficult circumstances (McEwen, 2007). Interpersonal and social skills, such as personal strategies for making relationships, are protective factors when children find ways to solve problems, talk to others about concerns, and take appropriate action when angry or upset (Morland, 1999). Resilient people can change their coping strategies to fit the situation because protective factors are not fixed but dynamic, interpersonal, and interactive (Garrod et al., 2002).

The rapid physical changes of adolescence also bring more mature cognitive and linguistic skills that resilient youth use to cope with difficult situations and topics. Cameron et al. (2010) explore how at-risk youth used humour as a "strategy for navigating the potentially exhilarating and challenging terrain of adolescence" (p. 719). The adolescents in the study used

many types of humour including teasing and sarcasm to deal with awkward and stressful situations. Similarly, Hoffman Clark (2007) demonstrates how refugee youth use humour to decrease stress when faced with cultural clashes in a new country. For example, youth who took a light-hearted view of their parents' seemingly over-protective rules for religious observance, presented as independent yet trustworthy, in following familial expectations.

An attribute that is often overlooked or misunderstood is youths' capacity to know what they need in order to live well. Ko and Perreira (2010) found that youth faced with the tremendous challenge of adapting to a new culture select the cultural beliefs and behaviours that support their wellbeing. When the dissonance between the home and mainstream cultures is great, immigrant and refugee youth make choices regarding how to integrate while remaining loyal to their family (Hoffman Clark, 2007), which often comes at a great but unrecognized emotional toll (Garrod et al., 2002). Ungar (2005) theorizes that the agentic choices of youth who are oppressed due to race, class, or learning needs may be expressed in *nonconventional* forms of behaviour. He suggests, therefore, that "we would do better helping children if we spent more time asking them to tell us what they need" (p. 441).

Although children's personality features and social skills play a large part in buffering risk, children's ability to cope with the stress and crisis is also predicted by the support from primary caregivers, the neighbourhood, and peer group (Arafat & Musleh, 2006; Brendtro, Mitchell, & McCall, 2009; Fraser as cited in Ungar, 2008). "Children's resilience is as dependent on what is built inside them as what is built around them" (Ungar, 2005, p. 429).

2.2.3 Family and Friends

Social capital is a term frequently used when referring to the acquisition of cultural resources and the development of social bonds (Terrion, 2006) "gained through participation in

social networks” (Hoffman Clark, 2007). Resilience is increased by the family's shared ethnic identity as well as the ability to develop a sense of trust and engage in problem-solving communication (McCubbin, Ishikawa, & McCubbin, 2008). The family provides “bonding social capital [which] is good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity” (Putnam, 2000, p. 22). Strong family bonds strengthen the resilience of youth during the difficult stages of migration and adjustment (Ko & Perreira; 2010). When family members are absent or unable to provide stability, surrogate family members can provide children and youth the sense of attachment critical for healthy development (Clarkson, 2011; Graham & Jordan, 2011) and cultural adjustment (Hirsi Ali, 2007). Connections outside the family are also important in the development of resilience.

Creating bridging networks is helpful for making connections with people outside the usual circle of family and close friends. Social ties with acquaintances are particularly important when seeking employment or information because they broaden the realm of contacts which are crucial for making economic advancements (Putnam, 2000). The benefits of networking stretch far beyond increased job opportunities. Making contacts with other population groups helps refugees and immigrants function more effectively, reduces tensions between those who are seen as strangers, prevents isolation, and increases leisure-time opportunities (Kazemipur, 2004; Rothfusz, 2006).

Since bonding and bridging social capital are vital to the formation of civic-minded citizenship and safe communities (Putnam, 2000) all citizens have a vested interest in helping newcomers feel safe and welcome. Because trust is “one of the three crucial components of social capital” (Kovalaninen, 2005, p. 72), helping youth overcome the use of mistrusting as a survival strategy will benefit the entire community. Personal contact with supportive others is

critical for adjustment (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007) and necessary to heal from the experiences of forced migration (Pipher, 2002). When young people build networks outside their families and ethnic communities, it reduces isolation, encourages adjustment to the new country, and moves youth forward from the pain of trauma (Walmod, Oxenberg, & Tewelde, 2006). When family or caregivers are unable to provide adequate support, “youth will still seek out contact with significant adults as a forum in which to author an identity” (Ungar, 2004, p. 38). One place of contact for developing relationships and building social capital to support resilience is the educational environment (Hoffman Clark, 2007).

2.3.4 Teachers and Schools

Teachers and schools can be major factors in building resilience and creating opportunities for adjustment (Coventry et al., 2003; Ingleby & Watters, 2002; Pike, Cohen, & Pooley, 2008). For many immigrant and refugee youth, school is the first point of contact with Canadians and culturally diverse people; it is the initial introduction into Canadian culture, values, and behaviours. Integration into school culture assists newcomers merge into the larger community (Nash et al., 2006). “Interactions with teachers peers, and curricula all influence a child’s growing and changing sense of self, making the school a key site in the construction of a social and cultural identity” (Hoffman Clark, 2007, p. 1-2). Consequently, schools have been identified as the primary settlement agency for immigrant and refugee youth (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Wilkinson, 2002).

Most importantly, youth develop a sense of safety in schools where students are respected and trusting relationships are built between students, teachers, and administration (Aronowitz, 2001). Trust is essential for academic and introspective learning. When teachers can create an environment of trust where it is safe to take academic risks, youth develop an emotional

attachment to school. As a result, students feel that school and learning are relevant over and above academic performance, and this learning will impact their future (Zwarych, 2004).

To summarize, youth new to Canada arrive with attributes and supports that have the potential to buffer risk and promote resilience. Strong cultural beliefs and practices play a fundamental role in providing comfort and healing as well as stabilizing, guiding principles for living when all else has changed. The emotional turmoil caused by relocation, forming new relationships, and creating an identity across cultures can be more successfully navigated when youth have personality traits and skills to problem solve in various situations, find joy and humour in life, and express personal needs. In addition, when families, friends, and teachers provide continuity and safety, youth are more likely to have the capacity to cope with tremendous social, education, and emotional change.

Understanding the differences and similarities of different cultural groups “can improve a community’s capacity to foster youth resilience” (Theron et al., 2011). A practice that strengthens resilience and stretches across the educational, cross-cultural, and mental health literature is the use of storytelling. In the following section, I review the literature related to storytelling for literacy learning and emotional wellbeing.

2.3 The Power of Stories

Stories are a powerful force for learning and healing across cultures. In the introduction to Mariatu Kamara’s biography entitled *The Bite of the Mango*, former child soldier from Sierra Leone Ishmael Beah writes, “In my culture, every story is told with the purpose of either imparting knowledge, repairing a broken bond, or transforming the listener and the teller” (p. 7). Closer to home, First Nations Canadian storyteller, Richard Van Camp, reveals the relevance of story in a rapidly changing world:

We are starving for stories and a sense of community. Electronic media does not always fulfill that need the way personal interactions do. We may think we're "connecting" with friends and family with every tweet, text and e-mail, but it's not what we need as human beings. We all need to feel welcomed and we all need to feel that we belong. We all deserve to be welcomed and celebrated for the miracles we are . . . We are all children again in the presence of great storytelling. Storytelling is a feast for the soul, mind and sacred child within. We all deserve to be nourished and blanketed with our inheritance as human beings. (personal communication, February 27, 2011)

The wisdom of Beah and Van Camp is echoed by numerous researchers and writers who contribute to the literature.

For thousands of years, storytelling has been used across cultures to teach lessons and strengthen cultural identities (Edwards & Sienkewicz, 1990; King, 2003; Rogoff, 2003). In more recent times, the age-old practice of storytelling has been used as a teaching strategy for literacy learners (Haas Dyson, 1994), a culturally-appropriate method of addressing the effects of trauma (Hong Kingston, 2006; Nadeau & Measham, 2006), and a method of social change (Bell, 2010).

2.3.1 Stories for Literacy Learning

Across cultures, stories are used to teach powerful lessons and shape human development. “Science, religion, proper behaviour, community tradition and history are taught and learned through narratives in many communities” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 292). Due to the familiar nature of storytelling, many educators believe that narratives provide an engaging method of encouraging literacy (Freeman et al., 2002; Haas Dyson, 1994; Heath, 1994; Klinger, 2010; Miller & Mehler, 1994). One such educator is Dr. Hetty Roessingh who developed the dual language book project because “[n]arrative/stories are an ideal vehicle and provide an

interesting context for children to develop vocabulary and early literacy skills and concepts and to acquire cultural information and thinking skills” (p. 1, <http://www.duallanguageproject.com/educators.html>). Rather than using lessons from workbooks that have little transferability to the needs of everyday life (Veeman et al., 2006), learning becomes meaningful by connecting students’ stories to history and contemporary politics (Fine et al., 2007). Educators who consider the whole child recognize that the support of a learning community is a powerful force in promoting literacy (Freeman et al., 2002; Heller, 1994). Reading, writing, and telling stories can also contribute to the emotional wellbeing of youth.

2.3.2 Stories for Emotional Wellbeing

Engagement in activities such as oral traditions, storytelling, and talking circles results in change of perspective (Hickling, 2007). Planning for storytelling puts youth in control because “planning is imagining a possible agentive narrative” (Johnston, 2004, p. 33). Traditional and personal stories can be used with immigrant and refugee youth to enhance emotional wellbeing in three areas: (a) identity confusion following migration (Rousseau et al., 2005); (b) developing a sense of hope for the future (Johnston, 2004); and (c) healing trauma (Hong Kingston, 2006).

Youth new to Canada are faced with the difficult process of establishing a new identity while blending cultures (Beiser, 1999; Suárez-Orozco, 2000). Narratives can help youth work through this process because “we constantly tell stories about ourselves to others and ourselves, and the stories shape who we think we are” (Johnston, 2004, p. 30). Narratives buffer risk as youth explore identities and retrieve a sense of wholeness after experiencing the loss of land and family (Rousseau et al., 2004; Williams, Labonte, & O’Brien, 2003). Narratives can move the teller forward in life through the process of understanding the behaviours of others, explaining

past experiences, and imagining future scenarios which help decision-making (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Thinking about the future and developing a sense of hope are essential for wellbeing because pragmatic people focus on the present while optimistic people focus on the future (Beiser, 1999). Founding stories offer youth adaptive strategies to face challenges and build a sense of hope and agency by critically examining the past yet concentrating on the present and the future (Nadeau & Measham, 2006; Rousseau et al., 2004). The heart of a good narrative is a character that faces a problem and solves it by acting strategically.

Helping children to develop hope and to deal with trauma through storytelling has been successfully used in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Rachel Rozentals-Thresher (2011) describes how the children deal with the loss of parents due to HIV/AIDS by using stories and metaphor because personal feelings are often overwhelmingly difficult to articulate. Rozentals-Thresher (2011) observes that sometimes, children cannot say they are depressed, but they might say there is a fire burning inside them. Children also reflect on stories written by others because it is easier to talk about the story than talking directly about their own lives. Creative play and the arts are ways of temporarily “suspending reality for a while in order to look at their grief and explore their emotions [as well as] helping people focus on their strengths and how they have coped” (p. 5).

Many of the ideas regarding storytelling and wellness are practiced by Maxine Hong Kingston (2006) in writing workshops with military veterans. Hong Kingston (2006) teaches people affected by war to write as a means of healing, understanding the past, and moving into the future:

We tell stories and we listen to stories in order to live. To stay conscious. To connect one with another. To understand consequences. To keep history. To rebuild civilization. . . . The veterans need to write. They would write the unspeakable. Writing, they keep track of their thinking; they leave a permanent record. Processing chaos through story and poem, the writer shapes and forms experience, and thereby, I believe, changes the past and remakes the existing world. The writer becomes a new person after every story, every poem; and if the art is very good, perhaps the reader is changed too. (p. 1)

The healing effect of working toward social change is noted in literature regarding immigration, trauma, and storytelling.

Moving on to make changes in the larger society is a method of healing (Pipher, 2002) because people feel agentive through activism. Activism can take the form of storytelling because telling stories that have been silenced is an empowering act (Nafisi, 2010), and youth who have been silenced can have great insight into the need for bearing witness (Zunti, 2002). When marginalized people and their allies address issues of oppression and unearned privilege, the energy of an environment is charged with optimism and hope (Bishop, 1994). Regaining power of our individual stories promotes emotional wellbeing and a sense of agency (Logger & Enrum, 2006).

2.3.3 Stories for Social Change

Including the narratives of refugee and immigrant youth in public discourse has the potential to create social change. Valuing personal narratives from a variety of voices and the everyday as a source of agency (Giroux, 2005) can raise awareness and inform members of the general public less familiar with the pre- and post-migration challenges faced by youth. In turn, administrators of education, immigration, and social policies can become more empathic to the

needs of youth new to Canada. “This role of story as a way of explaining and of prompting others to new perceptions makes special sense for those who see their experiences as somehow marginal, as lying outside the mainstream of their associates” (Heath, 1994, p. 215).

In *Storytelling for Social Justice*, Bell (2010) uses the term *concealed stories* to describe stories “just beneath the surface; not so much unknown as constantly overshadowed, pushed back into the margins, conveniently ‘forgotten or repressed’” (p. 44). Mainstream discourse “works against the telling and hearing of concealed stories that challenge dominant white racial views of the world” (Bell, 2010, p. 45). Bringing concealed stories to light is uncomfortable yet beneficial for all citizens. Resisting racism and oppression is healthy for individuals and “makes a society stronger, more resilient and democratic, and more effective at fostering the well-being of its people” (Bell, 2010, p. 62).

A sense of agency is developed within a framework of psychological, social, cultural, and economic aspects. Using Freire’s pedagogical theories, Logger and Enrum (2006) assist refugees and immigrants first to understand the social, economic, and political situations that put people in a position of powerlessness, and second to realize the beneficial combination of critical reflection and action. Insight must be combined with action to maintain a sense of hope (Garrod et al., 2002). Narratives have also been used in projects with elementary children in an effort to increase learning while maintaining or strengthening the students’ home culture and language.

In a project with bilingual and multilingual elementary school children, Cummins and Early (2011), explored the use of narratives or identity texts to promote language learning, negotiate a sense of self in a new culture, and work toward social change. The authors wrote:

Classroom interactions that enable students to create identity text which showcase their intellectual, linguistic, multimodal, and artistic talents, challenge the devaluation of

identity that many linguistically diverse and other marginalized students experience in context where their home languages or varieties of language are not explicitly acknowledged as intellectual and cultural resources. (p. 4)

Cummins and Early (2011) along with an international cohort of researchers demonstrated that the age-old practice of storytelling can be combined with twenty-first century technology. The multilingual narrative project provided opportunities for English language learners to acquire new academic knowledge by building on prior knowledge and at the same develop an awareness of the ways knowledge intersects with power.

To conclude, the literature on resilience shows that there are cultural, personal, and social factors that buffer risk and strengthen the capacity of youth to cope with pre- and post-migration challenges. Cultural and religious practices provide youth stability in the face of tremendous, unsettling changes. Personality traits and social skills help youth problem solve, voice personal needs, and find positive aspects to challenges. The social support of family, peers, and teachers play a significant role in assisting youth to develop the attributes to cope with pre- and post-migration difficulties. The use of storytelling enhances resilience by incorporating students' cultures, promoting literacy, examining identity change caused by migration, and building trust.

In the third chapter, I describe the research segment of my learning journey and how I put theory into practice. This section contains an explanation of how I chose methods based on my desire to create an anti-oppressive research project that could also offer participants a way of dealing with past trauma. I outline how I selected information collection methods that would be relevant, engaging and beneficial for the youth participants who experienced interrupted education and forced migration.

Chapter Three

My Story of a Research Journey: Methodology

During my learning journey I came to believe that when telling people's stories "[i]t's not enough to do no harm; one must also do good" (Michael as cited in Crown, 2009, p. 1). As a teacher-researcher, my goal was to use an "ethic of care approach" (Prosser, 2011, p. 494) and avoid creating the situation described by Kamara (2009) who was interviewed by doctors and journalists after the amputation of her arms during civil unrest in Sierra Leone. The young woman reflected, "All of them were so busy writing things down that they barely looked at me. Half the time, I didn't even know if they were listening" (Kamara, 2009, p. 146). Rather than treating newcomer youth as research subjects, I strove to bring about an atmosphere of inclusion and respect.

My goal was to create a method of data collection to answer the question: What are the pre- and post-migration factors that place newcomer youth at risk for early school leaving and involvement in illicit activity, and what are the factors that support youth to be resilient in the face of migration challenges? My hope was that by being emotionally present and patient during the process, I could create an educationally engaging as well as a potentially healing environment for the student participants in my study (Nadeau & Measham, 2006; Pekrul & Levin, 2007; Rousseau et al., 2005; Wilson, 2008). An additional goal was to raise awareness regarding the experiences of youth who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration because without educators understanding the students' cultures and experiences, these

youth will overwhelmingly continue to fail (Gunderson, 2000). The challenge was to find an appropriate methodology.

In order to create a method of collection that suited the research location of a school setting and in establishing rapport between the participants and me, I combined practices from several areas of study. The qualitative researcher as a *bricoleur* or *do-it-yourself person*, uses the “aesthetic and material tools” for her craft, and “if new tools or techniques have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In the five sections of this chapter, I describe how I combined theories and processes to create an unobtrusive, multi-method approach for this research study.

In the first section I discuss the rationale for using action research with secondary school English as an additional language (EAL) students as an act of inclusion and anti-oppression (Freire, 2001; Frideres, 1992). The second section describes the Saskatchewan secondary school setting in which the research was conducted and the process of recruiting student and teacher participants. In the third section, I explain the theories and process of collecting narratives to create an atmosphere of inclusion and allow youth the flexibility to discuss the issues most pertinent to them (Stiles, 1993, Torre & Fine, 2008). The methods for this project include in-class oral and written storytelling, digital narrative production or Photovoice, open-ended interviews, and classroom observations.

The fourth section is the introduction of the participants: eight students from a grade eleven sheltered English Language Arts (ELA 20) class whose home countries include Burma, China, Germany, Iran, Pakistan, and Somalia; three students originating from Afghanistan, Iran, and Somalia respectively who were registered in other classes; and three Canadian-born teachers who use storytelling as a teaching tool. I briefly introduce the participants based on my

observations and interviews and provide more personal details using excerpts from the participants' interviews and writings. Finally, I elucidate my method of interpretation based on the literature related to narrative inquiry and grounded theory. The methods of inquiry and analysis that I chose, as well as the format in which I describe the process is intentionally presented with the goal of acknowledging the voice of youth and my role as an ally.

3.1 Rationale for Using Action Research

A researcher refines a methodology to not only reflect her personal philosophies and theories but also to suit the participants and the particular setting in which the study is conducted (Crotty, 1998). My choice of methodology was directly influenced by the challenges I observed while teaching English as an additional language (EAL) students. My impetus for returning to graduate studies was to explore ways to keep EAL youth who experienced interrupted education and forced migration connected with school. I sought to identify the social and emotional programs and classroom activities that enable youth to work through the psychosocial challenges of migration. As a teacher-researcher, exploring methods compatible with everyday teaching was appealing.

In the past, research has been “conducted by academics for academics and was often critical of teachers, frequently inaccessible to teachers, and usually offered little that they could translate into classroom practice” (Balzer, 2006, p. 103). Alternatively, action research provides a pragmatic framework for teachers-researchers who believe it is erroneous to separate practice and theory, because teaching and research are intertwined, action-oriented, and built around the lived experiences of the students (Freire, 2001). Action research is an approach to inquiry that is “natural, human, and intrinsically sensible” (Kidd & Kral, 2005, p. 187). It is practical rather than idealistic (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) because it addresses the needs and interests of the

student participants. When schools make a cultural shift to become learning communities, collaborative teams of teachers “are not content to accept the ‘external’ validation of researchers. They want practices to be ‘internally’ validated in their school, in their classrooms, with their students” (Eaker, Dufour, & Dufour, 2002, p. 21). Most importantly, action research conducted in classrooms offers teachers a way to get to know student opinions and have in-depth conversations about school issues (Perkul & Levin, 2007). Action research is also appropriate when working with people who are kept on the periphery of society due to social status, race, and age.

Born out of a desire to involve the oppressed in advocacy of social problems (Frideres, 1992) and include participants in knowledge production regardless of previous education (Hughes, 2003; Hutanuwa et al., 1992; Rahman, 1991; Weerackody & Fernando, 2009), action research is perfectly suited for EAL classroom research. This methodology serves to include youth traditionally excluded from research (McLean Taylor et al., 1995) and blamed for their academic and social failure (Mitra, 2007). Since 1990, appreciation of youths’ capacity for decision making and reflection has increased, and there has been a change to use diverse, school-based, collaborative methods that place student voices at the centre rather than the margins (Beverly, 2000; MacPherson, 1994; Rutter et al. As cited in Omar 2008; Thiessen, 2007). This restructuring of methodological design demonstrates a researcher’s commitment to social justice.

By creating inquiry projects that actively involve youth, a researcher makes a social statement about the value of young people’s voices. “Repositioning youth as researchers rather than ‘the researched’ shifts the practice of researching *on* youth to *with* youth [Fine et al.’s italics], a position that stands in sharp contrast to the current neo-liberal constructions of youth as dangerous, disengaged, blind consumers, lacking connection, [and] apathetic” (Fine et al., 2007,

p. 808). Youth are understood to be active agents who contribute, transform, and influence their situation and environment (Eyber & Ager, 2004). Participants are engaged as valued members of the learning community who are capable of understanding and making decisions regarding learning priorities (Rudduck, 2007). Narrative methodology used in research with immigrant and refugee youth “privileges students’ voices, which is significant as the participants’ voices may not otherwise be valued in society due to barriers of language, age, religion, and recency of arrival” (Hoffman Clark, 2007, p. 5). Being involved in action research can be beneficial to youths’ academic and emotional growth.

Students also gain from participating at an active and intellectually stimulating level rather than being passive collaborators burned out by surveys and interviews (Lui, 2005). In contrast to decontextualized inquiries in which “people under study” (Jessen Williamson, 2006) receive no benefit or value, bringing marginalized students into discussions regarding school change can create climates that promote a sense of agency, trust and inclusion, and reduce early school leaving (Smyth, 2007). A secondary purpose in making methodological choices is that I am also making a political statement. The need to take this stance developed out of my slowly-emerging awareness regarding the inequalities of which I had so long been ignorant.

Coming from a Euro-Canadian, white, middle class background, my formative years spent in small-town Saskatchewan gave me few opportunities to develop relationships with culturally diverse people. My concept of racism was connected to black-white conflict in the United States, while I remained naively oblivious to issues around me. The collective silence of a culturally homogeneous community gave me a distorted view of normalcy and no awareness of the plight of First Nations people living on reserves within 50 kilometres of my home and the struggles of the only Chinese family in town. The layers of protective social insulation began to

fall away when I moved to larger communities and traveled extensively through Europe, the Middle East, and Australia. What truly opened my eyes to the joys of diversity and sensitized me to the consequences of systemic racism was my experience as a volunteer tutor for the Saskatoon Open Door Society. Having the opportunity to develop friendships with culturally diverse people, share personal stories, and experience the awkward moments created by cultural misunderstandings all worked to change my perspective. During my teacher-training I attended the mandatory Native Studies class and was awe-struck by the hidden history of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people of Canada and particularly our prairie province. This new-found knowledge impacted me so profoundly, I added a Native Studies minor to my degree. Later, as I pursued a career teaching English as an Additional Language (EAL), the relationships I developed with students and their families compelled me to look beyond the superficial nature of food and dance festivals, and examine my taken-for-granted beliefs about gender, class and racial equality.

As I began confronting my personal ideologies, attitudes, and feelings toward cultural differences (James, 2001), I became mindful of colonialism, racism, and white privilege (Wise, 2010). Despite the fact that race is based on classification of superficial, physical characteristics (Bolaria & Li, 1988) developed by British colonizers to justify their hegemony (Clement, 1998), the perpetuation of stereotypes sustains domination with the rationale that others are not deserving of equal rights and privileges (Desai, 2001). Since schools have typically been places of colonization (McTaggart, 1992), there has been a failure to address issues of power, powerlessness, and the “the norm of whiteness as an ethnic category that secures its dominance by appearing to be invisible” (Giroux, 2005, p. 89). As an educator and researcher concerned about social justice, I sought an alternative methodology that unsettles the existing power

structures (Balzer, 2006) and “create[s] ways to look at and talk about or study diverse cultures and peoples in ways that do not perpetuate exploitation and domination” (hooks, 2004, p. 153).

There are, however, deterrents to being involved in politically-charged investigations.

Making a political statement through research has consequences. In the fight against oppression, contributing to social action requires taking risks because positivists and post-positivists see an action objective as contamination of the research project (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Although action research has gained credibility and popularity, student research is often seen as less academic because of the open-ended, student-driven format, which is in contrast to studies with a researcher-directed focus (Kincheloe, 2007). As interdisciplinary research increases, so do the tensions regarding what knowledge is and what university students should learn (McMullen, 2002).

Despite the challenges, I was determined to explore youths’ perspectives on education and migration because in the pursuit of social justice, inaction is complicity (Thomas, 2001). I felt very strongly that the student participants should have the opportunity to discuss the issues most relevant to them. My ideal scenario would have been to conduct the research in my own classroom where the concerns of students would naturally arise, and as a class we would pursue a research goal. However, the reality of this imagined project was not practical because of my developing research skills and a possible conflict of interest by being both researcher and evaluator. As a result, an additional challenge in the process was to find an appropriate setting to conduct a school-based action inquiry with an accepting teacher.

3.2 The Next Stage of the Journey: Preparing to Do Research

The research was conducted in a secondary or high school with grades 9 to 12 in a primary urban setting in the province of Saskatchewan. The school enrolment was

approximately 1400 with a constantly fluctuating EAL population. At the beginning of the study, there were eighty-five EAL students receiving support. The majority of the narrative collection occurred during the first five-month semester, although several interviews were conducted during the next five months of school and the beginning of the summer vacation.

Establishing this research site presented several challenges. Coordinating action research that met the ethical requirements of two institutions was a daunting undertaking. In order to write an appropriate research proposal, I was compelled to find a teacher who would allow me to be present in her or his classroom for an extended period of time, meet the principal's requirements for research, and, above all, follow the protocol of the school division. In the spring of 2010, an experienced teacher and the school principal generously gave me permission to observe a class planned for the following fall semester.

This class was constructed for students who required a grade eleven English language arts credit, were older than the typical grade eleven students, but had not gained a level of English needed to be successful in a class integrated with Canadian-born youth. This class was termed a sheltered grade eleven English language arts (ELA 20) because the same curriculum guidelines would be followed but with consideration for students' developing language skills. Because of the school's rapidly-growing EAL program and the frequent relocation of immigrant and refugee families, the teacher did not know exactly who the students would be. This affected my research design. It was difficult to predict the dynamics of a September class and design a participatory project with shared control over the process and outcomes of interpretation (Hughes, 2003; Jessen Williamson, 2006; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

I was also constrained by the requirements of the curriculum guidelines and the fact that there was no guarantee the students would be together as a group for more than one five-month

semester. As a result, I discarded my intention to create a truly participatory action research project where the participants could take a major role in planning the direction of the project. Instead, my queries were in response to previous EAL students' comments. In my previous years of teaching EAL, students had lamented that teachers did not understand what it is like to be an immigrant. Youth believed that educators did not know who arrived as immigrants or refugees, and therefore EAL students were held to the same expectations and standards as Canadian-born youth. A second recurring student grievance I heard during a decade of teaching was that the EAL program did not meet the needs of youth who arrived with little first language education. Because of these student concerns, I designed the interview questions from which the student participants in this study could expand or deviate: "What do young people need when they come to Canada?" and "What stories do you want Canadians to know about newcomers to Canada?" With the assistance of the student participants, who I introduce in the next section, I was able to move beyond an "adultcentric" (Ungar, 2001) approach to investigate youths' perspective on what is sustaining.

3.3 Introducing the Participants through Story

The study began with eight participants from one secondary school in Saskatchewan and expanded organically to a total of 11 students and three teachers. For the purpose of this study, youth are referred to as people between the ages of 13 and 22, which is the age of funded enrolment in Saskatchewan secondary school. The term *youth*, however, remains problematic. Rogoff (2003) provides numerous examples of the cultural relativity of the terms *childhood*, *youth* and *adulthood* because of diversity in expectations related to age. Whereas some cultures encourage very responsible behaviours and activities at an early age, other cultures create a childhood free of mature expectations. In western cultures, the advancement of industrialization

has led to the time of childhood being lengthened, which is directly correlated to the age of school enrolment. This imposed stage of development is not found in all cultures. Rather, the stories of the students in this study reflect diverse cultural stages of life and vast differences in expectations and responsibilities. I will, however, describe the student participants as *youth* in reference to the age of Saskatchewan secondary school enrolment with the acknowledgement that the term is not universal.

The first eight participants were English as an additional language (EAL) students in a grade eleven English Language Arts class (ELA 20). This class created specifically for EAL students is often referred to as a *sheltered* class. Although the class was originally planned with the intent of serving youth at an intermediate English language level, the lack of appropriate classes for youth at a beginner level of English necessitated the creation of a multi-level program. Two of the students completed the credit as an English as an additional language (EAL) credit. For ease of understanding, I will include the two students when I refer to the ELA 20 participants.

Despite the great disparity in English language levels and previous education, all student participants received instruction around the same themes and were given the same assignments with adjustments for academic ability. Some of the writing and discussion prompts originated in a program developed for teachers to assist with the settlement of newcomer students in the Netherlands and England. The *Pharos* program begins with topics such as, *the meaning of my name*, and progresses to more complex issues regarding the important people in students' lives. The purpose of such exercises is explained in an on-line introduction to Pharos training and materials (<http://www.pharos.nl/information-in-english/school-programmes-for-refugee-youth-in-secondary-education>):

The aim is for pupils to share their experiences and develop skills that will enable them to cope more effectively with distressful experiences, not to explicitly bring up traumatic experiences for discussion. Emphasis is placed on the supportive factors in the social environment.

Miss O.S. followed this philosophy and took great care not to retraumatize youth by asking them to retell difficult situations. Based on a combination the Pharos program topics and the Saskatchewan grade eleven English Language Arts curriculum students created portfolios as evidence of their learning, which they submitted to me for my research purposes. They were also invited to participate in individual interviews: five students agreed; one student relocated to Alberta before interviews occurred; and two students declined. It was unfortunate that three students did not participate in the interview process because each person's unique migration experience would increase the richness of the research. It was more important, however, to respect the wishes of those who declined since promoting the students' sense of agency was one of my primary concerns. I understood the natural process of action research to include participant withdrawal as well as additional participants joining the project as it progressed.

Six more participants were included as the study naturally evolved. There were no particular criteria for accepting the six participants other than their eagerness to share stories about the migration experience. In all situations, the power of storytelling arose in casual conversation as I entered the school, walked down the hall, or waited for class to begin. One student from another EAL class presented me with a personal essay about his experiences. His EAL teacher asked him if he would like to be involved in the study, and he agreed to submit his essay for my research and to have a personal interview. Two EAL students were recommended by their teachers who were moved by the students' accounts of migration. One of these teachers

was also the instructor for the sheltered English Language Arts 20 class. The other teacher taught a computer applications class. The two students agreed to submit their written class assignments to my research, but neither student participated in interviews because one student relocated to Ontario, and I was not able to make contact with the other student due to end-of-the-year time constraints. I followed up with the referring teachers, and they agreed to personal interviews. The final interview participant was a teacher in the same school who engaged me in casual conversation about her experiences teaching EAL students and using storytelling as a teaching tool. I invited her for an interview, and she agreed. The six additional and unexpected participants added to the rich, thick description via their unique perspectives.

There are limitations to the participant recruitment for this study. Although I recognize that family members play a critical role in children's adjustment to Canada, the opinions of parents are not included. Parents of students under the age of 18 were informed of the study and asked to approve their child's participation in the data collection process, which they did. They were not asked to participate directly in the study to make it abundantly clear to the students that this study was about their narrative and their experience and not the broader experience of their family.

Table 3.1 summarizes the student participants' ages, countries of origin, gender, places of migration prior to arrival in Saskatchewan, and immigration status. Table 3.2 outlines the teacher participants' years of teaching experience and areas of specialization. The names of the participants have been changed to maintain anonymity; dates regarding length of stay in Canada or years of teaching experience are in relation to the commencement of this study.

Table 3.1 *Student Participants*

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Country of birth	Migration prior to arrival in SK	Family arrived in Canada as	Time in Canada
Adnan	19	M	Saudi Arabia	Turkey, Toronto, Edmonton, Winnipeg	Refugees	1 year & 10 months
Loso	18	M	Saudi Arabia	Turkey, Toronto, Edmonton, Winnipeg	Refugees	1 year & 10 months
Marty	17	M	England	Iran	Visitors	5 months
Tim Tom	17	M	Germany		Temporary workers	3 years
Pearl	19	F	Pakistan	Toronto	Immigrants	3 years
YG	20	M	Burma	Thailand	Refugees	3.5 years
November	17	M	Pakistan	Toronto	Immigrants	9 years
Oscar	20	M	China		Immigrants	2 years
Halwa	19	F	Somalia	Kenya, Saskatchewan, Edmonton	Refugees	2 years
Hamid	19	M	Afghanistan	Russia	Refugees	8 years
Sandman	21	M	Iran		Immigrants	6 months

Table 3.2 *Teacher Participants*

Pseudonym	Years teaching	Area of specialization
Mr. Jack	25	Language Arts, Technology, Drama
Ms. G.	20	Language Arts
Miss O.S.	15	Language Arts, English as an Additional Language

The introduction of the participants that follows may seem somewhat unorthodox, yet the practice is sufficiently supported in theories of anti-oppressive education and action research (Barnard, Morland, & Nagy, 1999; Fine, Torre, Burns, & Payne, 2007; Rudduck, 2007). In addition, as an educator and researcher devoted to social justice and open to innovative approaches, my goal is to make the students' voices the most significant aspect of this research project. My brief introduction of the students is followed by the student participants' detailed introduction of themselves. The students' prolific writing and storytelling requires that I extract the most significant excerpts from their written submissions and interviews and arrange the passages to create a condensed history of each student. Although the students' levels of English proficiency vary greatly, I have made minimal edits with the intention of recognizing the youths' immense struggle to express their personal thoughts. In the introductions and throughout the dissertation, I have provided a context for the students' narratives with the purpose of informing readers and negating misunderstandings that lead to negative stereotyping. Lastly, I provide a brief introduction of the teachers followed by excerpts from personal interviews.

3.3.1 Adnan

Nineteen-year-old Adnan was born in Saudi Arabia, but because his parents are migrants from Somalia, the family was unable to obtain Saudi citizenship. Adnan, his mother, and his siblings arrived in Canada as refugees about one and a half years prior to the study. Saskatchewan was the family's fourth Canadian province of residence, and at the end of June they returned to Ontario. Adnan wrote:

My name is Adnan [second name] [family name]. My mom and dad gave me this name. When I was born my mom and dad picked this name for me. . . . My mom and dad love this name and that's why they picked for me.

In Saudi Arabia, I used to live fourteen years with nothing. Get beat up every day, look for money without shoes, bad clothes, running around . . . in one month, couldn't take shower. My mom say, "We can't live like in this way." . . . Like my mom, she never go to school. She never, ever been to school. Like she told, "I want a good life for my child."



Figure 3.1. Adnan's photo of his Saskatchewan home.

I go to school with my brothers we live in apartment with my mom and sister. I work after school four days a week part-time job I work because I help my mom with the money I make because the government they need ticket money [Canadian government's travel loan to refugees] so we have to pay the money to the government.

3.3.2 Loso

Eighteen-year-old Loso is the brother of Adnan. Loso wrote this story about his life and illustrated the story with pictures he found on the internet:

My name is Loso [four parts to name]. My father gave me that name. If I could change my name it will be Ali. They gave me this name right after I was born in a house. [My name] means Servant of the opener. It means lucky.

When I was seven years old, I went to Madras [Arabic word for school] school and graduated. In Saudi Arabia you go to one, two, three, four, five and six. Then you graduate. . . . I went to Duksee [Somali word for school]. This is a Somali school in Saudi Arabia. It is inside a house. They teach you Quran.



Figure 3.2. Boys' Islamic school. Retrieved from <http://thestar.com/>

On the weekend, sometimes I just played soccer with my friends. Sometimes I went to work with my father to help him make sofas. He would tell me to bring something to him.

3.3.3 Marty

Marty is the seventeen-year-old son of a visiting scholar. He and his parents arrived in Canada in April and returned to Iran at the end of January. Marty was placed in the sheltered class because it was the best fit for his English needs. Although he had not experienced forced migration, Marty participated in the research project and brought his perspective as a short-term visitor to the school. He used a cartoon to tell a story about a duck that flew to a new lake in search of excitement. As winter approached, the bird longed for the friends and comfort of home.



Figure 3.3. A duck in winter. Retrieved from <http://gnurf.net/>

My name is Marty. Actually it's the root of Mahdi. Mahdi is our last Imam [leader in a Muslim community]. We believe that he is invisible and is guiding people and after many times he will be visible by the order of god. His name is Mahdi which

means a leader. People call this name Marty because it is easier and also more beautiful. So my name means leader which my parents named me by when I was born.

I was born in England and after one year we went to Iran, because my parents' family were in Iran. I had a very good life with my family especially with my brothers. . . . When I came to Canada I really missed my brothers. . . . I found some good friends that really helped me but I found lots of Canadians unfriendly.

3.3.4 Tim Tom

German-born Tim Tom arrived in Canada three years prior to the study at the age of fourteen with his parents, an older sibling, and two younger siblings. Tim Tom's father immigrated under the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP) that "completely turned around the provinces' ability to attract and retain new immigrants" (Cameron, 2009, p. 38). During this research project, the family purchased a home in a newer area of the city, but Tim Tom chose to remain at the same school.

Tim Tom did not use photos in his stories. This is a graphic he designed for his children's book about a small dinosaur who was bullied until he was given a pair of shoes that made him the tallest and most popular student in the class.



Figure 3.4. Tim Tom's dinosaur graphic.

My name is Tim Tom. It is interesting how I got my first name. My parents were watching a movie and someone in that movie was called Tim. My parents like that name a lot and named me Tim. [My name] in [another language] means rich, leader, strong, powerful. My last name . . . means brickmaker. That's how I got my name!!

Living in Canada was the biggest change in my whole life. I had to learn a new language and that was very hard because I didn't know anyone who could help me. I didn't even know how to get around in the city so I couldn't do anything except sitting at home. A good change was that it's easy to find a job not like in Germany where it almost impossible to find a job because there are too many people.

3.3.5 Pearl

Pearl, the only female in the sheltered class, was born in Pakistan and immigrated to Canada with her mother and sister three years earlier when Pearl was sixteen. At the beginning

of the second semester, Pearl, who was then age 19, returned to Pakistan for two months to be married. At the end of June she returned faced with the challenges of sponsoring her husband and moving to another school close to the larger home her family purchased.

Unfortunately, Pearl used photos with copyright restrictions and so the photos could not be presented here. To represent the character in the children's story she wrote, she chose a small bluebird who shared her meagre resources with all her friends. Pearl wrote:

Right after I was born, my dad gave me my name Pearl which means peace of mind. He gave me this name because he had a sister. Her name was Pearl.

Unfortunately she died and for remembering her, my dad gave me this name. I don't want to change it.

When I was in grade five I was sick it was really serious. Doctors said that I had little white stones in my kidney so they said [an operation] is the last option. My mom every time stuck with me. . . . She found the way better than just doing operation. We went to other hospital and that doctor said that I will give you medicines and you have to take care of her. . . . Today I am a healthy girl and I am happy. This is all because of my mom.

3.3.6 YG

YG, his parents, and seven of nine siblings arrived as refugees about three and a half years prior to the research project. As an ethnic minority in Burma, YG's family was persecuted and threatened, so they fled to neighbouring Thailand. He and his family spent twelve years in a refugee camp until they were sponsored to come to Canada. Because the prospects of finding affordable housing and gainful employment in Saskatchewan were proving very difficult, the family moved to Alberta three months after this study began.

The internet-based photos YG chose for his story were predominantly aerial views of thatched roofed huts emerging from the lush green canopy of the Thai jungle. These scenes were in stark contrast to his personal photo of a Saskatchewan apartment block.



Figure 3.5. YG's photo of his Saskatchewan home.

My name is YG. I was born in Thai and Burma border. I born in the forest when Burmese solder came to my village and my family ran to outside the village for a while. My name actually means (gold + yellow) because when my mom was pregnant with me and my dad was to [f]ound the fish in the stream there after he saw the gold rain beside the stream. [A]lmost all the Burmese people love gold. . . . [T]he gold is too expensive for my own people. . . . They do not have enough money to buy gold. The rich people exchange the gold for food for poor farmer.

Some of family hard to live in [the refugee] camp. . . . In the camp also had along river and big stone beside the river. The play ground was close to my house. The

mountains around the camp and I [lived] there for 12 year. . . . I think this story about my homesick in Thai refugee camp.

3.3.7 November

November, a seventeen-year-old Pakistani student, arrived in Canada at age eight with his parents and younger sister. Although the family was well established in Pakistan, they are members of a minority Muslim sect which receives threats of violence. The most recent was the bombing of two mosques in June of 2010. In Canada, the family which had grown to eight, struggled but eventually settled in subsidized housing. November's photos were predominantly taken from the internet sites with copy right restrictions. He did not submit personal photos of his family for my research. Therefore, there is no photo to represent November's story.

November wrote:

My name is November. I was given my name when I was born at a hospital. I think my name means "A man with a long beard," which may represent long life. Some friends of my parents had a child with this name, but for some reason they changed it to something else. My parents liked it so they named me November. I like my name especially because few people can say it, also I've never met or heard of any one with this name and that makes it unique.

When I was eight years old, we were getting ready to come to Canada. We had packed our bags and gave away everything else. . . . We left for Canada around midnight . . . We arrived at Toronto, Ontario in Canada just before sunset . . . and stayed there for four months before coming here to [this city], Saskatchewan.

3.3.8 Oscar

The eighth student in the sheltered ELA 20 class is twenty year-old Oscar who emigrated with his parents from China about two years prior to the study. Although Oscar and his parents spoke no English when they arrived, they were able to find employment. Oscar worked after school to help his parents with daily expenses and to prepare for the return trip to China for the commemoration of a family member's death. The following is an excerpt from his writing portfolio and a drawing he created for his children's story:

My name is Oscar. It's a Chinese name. The name is given by my parents. It means they want me to do everything better than other people. The best thing is easy to understand. The bad thing is too short.

In China my High school is big. We have one class with 53 people in one classroom. There is a big library, different classes, big play ground. In China's school, we're need the same hair cut and same size "T" shirt. And there the student always fight [when] school [is] over.

The teacher always yelled, talk for a long time and give us a lot of homework. If you do something wrong, the teacher send you in the office. That is my China High school.

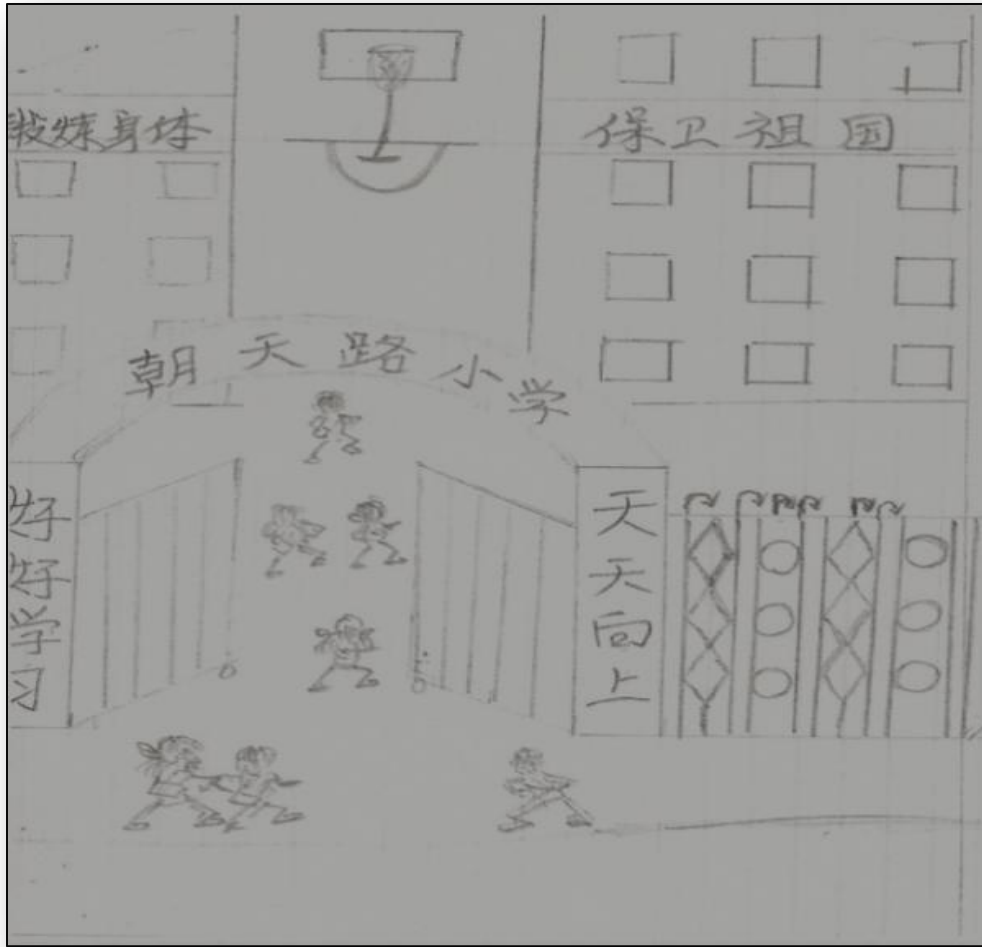


Figure 3.6. Oscar's drawing of his Chinese school.

The last three students in the study, Halwa, Hamid, and Sandman, were not in the sheltered class. Halwa and Hamid were referred to me by their teachers because they had written outstanding stories for other classes. Sandman introduced himself and submitted an essay he had written for self-reflection.

3.3.9 Halwa

Halwa was born in Somalia but raised in Kenya by her grandmother. She was later reunited with her mother and step-siblings and spent many years in a refugee camp. When Halwa was about seventeen she, her mother, and siblings were sponsored to come to Canada as refugees. The family initially settled in Saskatchewan but later moved to Alberta. Halwa returned to Saskatchewan a year later to help her sister and brother-in-law with their new baby. At the end of the first semester, Halwa moved to Ontario to support her recently-relocated mother and younger siblings. Halwa described her life in weekly journal entries and a story she created for a computer processing class. Interestingly, Halwa continued to expand on her life story project long after the assignment was submitted.

Halwa and I searched creativecommons.org to replace the photos she had originally used in her story. Her goal was to find a photo of an old woman with weathered skin and a brightly-coloured scarf. Our options were limited by copyright, so the photo below is not ideal, but it captures some of Halwa's descriptions of her strong grandmother.

I was born in Somalia in 1992 on April 25th. Then we moved to Kenya in 1992 on June 24th because Somalia went to war with another country. Life wasn't safe. I was 3 months old when we came to Kenya. I grew up there. . . . My mother went to Saudi Arabia. My grandma stayed in Kenya and she took care of me. I was happy to have my grandma she is a really nice grandma.



Figure 3.7. Grandmother. Retrieved from <http://www.flickr.com/photos/frankkeillor/>

2315684528/

In 1999 July 27th my mother came back to Kenya to see me. But she had a new baby with other man. I was happy to see my mother because she had left me when I was 4 years old. I had not seen her in 8 years and I had no idea who my mother was . . . I was really nervous and I had no idea what to say to my mother but later on we got to know each other. Then my mother and my brother and I moved to a new place: new home, new school, new mother. Everything was new; life was difficult for me. . . . We come to Canada in December 2008 . . . [so] now I am happy to have this life what I want to say is thanks Canada and government help us to have this life.

3.3.10 Hamid

Hamid was only eight months old when his family fled from Afghanistan to Russia. Three years later, his father was killed, so his mother was left to make arrangements for the family's safe passage to Canada. At the age of eleven, Hamid arrived in Saskatchewan with his mother and three older siblings. Because of his mother's desperate need to see her family, she and Hamid returned to Afghanistan during Hamid's last year of high school. The story submitted for my research, which was an assignment for a grade twelve English Language Arts (ELA 30) class, is Hamid's account of his two-month visit to Afghanistan with his mother.



Figure 3.8. Afghan flag. Retrieved from livingitfine.blogspot.com

In 1979, the Afghan government was corrupted by new laws and the invasion of Russia. This brought nothing but corruption to both countries. In 1989, when the Soviets left Afghanistan, a new set of government was formed when Mujahedeens, which means “Holy warriors”, took over the Afghani government and brought harsh side of Islam among people. The same year, my dad was in the army and went through many horrible

tasks. In 1991, when my dad was tired from all of these wars, he decided to study in Russia, but the war and corruption were still going on. By 1991, when my grandma died, there was nothing left for us so he decided to send us to Russia. He only stayed with us for three years. Then I saw the last of him. The image of his face is still in my memories. The time went fast and by the age of 11 we were immigrated to Canada. At that time Canada was not as famous as the US for their actions. It is more like a friendly country and people here live in peace.

3.3.11 Sandman

Sandman arrived from Iran about six months before this research project began. At the age of twenty-one he was unable to be included in his parents' application to immigrate to Saskatchewan, so he arrived as a visitor. Although he had completed two years of university in Iran, Sandman attended high school as a means of improving his English. The writing he submitted for this study was completed for his own reflection and efforts to deal with traumatic pre-migration events.



Figure 3.9. Sandman's self-portrait

This is me when I came from my trip to Kavir dessert. Actually I painted myself.

I came from the land of Persia, birth place of brave men and ancient legends. Right now it's called Iran, and it has a really ugly, dirty capital city that I love! It's the city of crime, terror, and pain. Of course it has lots of positive parts that make me love it. It's so crowded that it's sometimes hard to feel lonely. People are either friendly or aggressive. It's possible to make a friend in just five minutes, but you must always watch your back.

I really hate politics, but recently there were some changes in my country that made me fight for my freedom. I used to work voluntarily for 2 years in a Non Governmental Organization in the support of street and working children who live in harsh situations. Most of their lives were ruined by drugs. Actually it was what I thought

at first, but one day after a long story of trying to help three addicted children that were living in the street, and refusal of the governmental organizations for helping them, I understood that our government is the main reason of our problems.

The next three participants are teachers who use storytelling in their classrooms. They are Mr. Jack, Ms. G., and Miss O.S.. Each teacher participated in an unstructured interview. Following my brief introduction of each person, I present excerpts from the personal interviews regarding each educator's use of storytelling as a teaching tool.

3.3.12 Mr. Jack

At the time of the research Mr. Jack was teaching grade 10 Computer Processing (CP 10), the class in which Halwa was enrolled. Mr. Jack was invited to participate in my research because he frequently talked to me as we travelled through the school. He made comments about the relationships he was building with the EAL students and the influence of their stories on him:

Many countries are like our First Nations culture where they have an oral tradition, so passing down stories from one generation to another by storytelling is important to them. I've made that part of the grade 9 program for teaching computers because I find that Power Point is a . . . pretty useless tool because you end up being attracted to the screen rather than the person speaking. So by sharing a slice of their own life, and where they're from, and what they're passionate about, you end up having them telling their stories . . . I think people just naturally want to tell their stories, but school doesn't foster that for the most part. School teaches us to close off to other people.

3.3.13 Ms. G.

Ms. G. has taught for ten years at the school in which the research was conducted, so she has many experiences teaching EAL students in grades 9 to 12 English Language Arts (ELA 9, 10, 20 and 30). Two of the major projects in her classes are writing children's books and creating personal memory books. Ms. G. shared many of her experiences using storytelling as a teaching tool:

In the grade eleven curriculum there's a unit called Reflection, and all the stories are looking back at childhood. . . . We do a reflective essay when we look back at an event in our childhood. That's the recollection part, and the reflective part is to think about what impact it had on you. How did it impact you? Why do you remember it? So we do a lot of talking about how events impacted us whether they be good or whether they be bad.

The other thing we've done all along is write an illustrated children's book. They have to write the story; they have to find the pictures . . . it's been a really, really, really good experience for these kids to write down what the impact was in coming to this country, and where they came from before, and what their life was like and to write stories about it. It's been a good assignment. . . . I always get them to share afterwards as well. I get them to show the rest of the class their books, and it really helps the communication and the classroom dynamics, I think, by doing this assignment.

3.3.14 Miss O.S.

Miss O.S. is an accredited English Language Arts teacher with a certificate in teaching English as a second or additional language. In her work with students across the spectrum, Miss O.S. uses journal and story writing. Miss O.S. taught the sheltered ELA 20 class in which the research was conducted:

[Storytelling] certainly does help me understand [EAL students] better. From a purely academic point of view, as their teacher, I can understand them a little better, and maybe understand what they need, or what would be more challenging for them, culturally or things like that. On a human level, they just amaze me. When I hear their stories, it, it makes me realize the strength of these young people and the courage of their families to bring them here. It teaches me so much about the world, and if I just look at it that way, because you know you can hear news reports about Sudan or Saudi Arabia or Somalia, but to actually be with a person who is telling me his or her first hand experience of it, that's what makes it a human experience. And so I feel like it benefits me in every way, as a teacher, and just as a human being.

Other students benefit too . . . [I]f it's a written story or it's something they're telling in class, I think the other students appreciate it too because it lets them find connections, and it also educates them. You know, that they're realizing what happens in different countries. . . . What I found so powerful about it was that it helped students connect to each other. Because even students who had completely different experiences found something in each others' stories to connect to and ask questions about and relate to their own lives.

The eleven student participants and three teacher participants offered stories of wisdom and insight gleaned from their personal challenges and successes. Having introduced the participants, the next question is how to gather the stories that will become such a rich source of information.

3.4 Gathering Stories

Three specific approaches to storytelling were retained to collect information in this project. First is the method of Photovoice in which students wrote their life stories and illustrated their work with photos from a variety of sources. Next, personal interviews took the format of storytelling directed by the participants. The last approach extended throughout the project as I observed students and their teacher recounting stories of past experiences in relation to the English language arts assignments. These three approaches, with the central focus on storytelling, seemed to me to best fit my long-term goal to promote social change through greater awareness of the needs of youth who arrive as refugees and immigrants. The process of storytelling and the narrative content would provide rich, beneficial information to academics as well as teachers working with immigrant and refugee youth (Bell, 2010; Fine et al., 2007).

3.4.1 Storytelling and Research

There are four specific ways in which written and oral storytelling is a viable methodology for action research with youth who arrive as refugees or immigrants. First, storytelling serves as an anti-oppressive research method by incorporating the voices of those previously marginalized and excluded from research because of culturally different world views or limited education (Fine et al., 2007). Culturally appropriate storytelling used as a method of information collection, “celebrates the local, the sacred, [and] the act of constructing meaning” (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000, p. 1052). Secondly, as action research, storytelling can be incorporated into the everyday activities of the participants, so it is relevant and purposeful (McKenzie & Hansson, 2009). Third, participation increases a sense of agency because many choices are left in the hands of the participants: the type of story to tell; how to tell it; and control over the direction of the story (Harper, 2000). Finally, the use of photos and art assists

participants to express issues that may be difficult to describe in words because of developing language or the sensitivity of the topics, and so there is a potential for healing (Hickling, 2007). As a research method, storytelling is appropriate for action research to learn more about the needs and strengths of secondary students who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration.

Views regarding what constitutes appropriate data collection in qualitative research with people on the margins are being reinterpreted. Lincoln and Denzin (2000) imagine qualitative research of the 21st century to be minimal, existential, vulnerable, and critical scholarship that “refuses to retreat to abstraction and high theory. . . . It celebrates autoethnography, the personal account, ‘mystories,’ myth, and folklore” (p. 1052). In particular, research which involves marginalized people previously excluded from the development of knowledge is undergoing radical transformation. For example, Boyden and de Berry (2004) conclude that researching issues regarding the forced migration of youth requires innovative methods because the use of pre-coded instruments and checklists cannot grasp the essence of their experiences. Moving away from western methods available to only well-educated professionals, in favour of the recognition and inclusion of personal stories, shifts the balance of power in favour of the respondents.

Action research with marginalized or disenfranchised social groups incorporates people’s everyday experiences and stories, which encourages participation in the process of social change (Pavlish, 2005; Williams et al., 2003). Researchers who strive to conduct anti-oppressive research recognize the views, experiences, and needs of people directly affected by research as being crucial to the success of appropriate change. Rather than program development for low-income students of color being made by white, middle-class adults, or researchers taking an

“adultcentric” (Ungar, 2001) perspective of youth resilience, it is necessary to investigate from youths’ perspective to find what sustains youth (Kohn, 2006). The involvement of communities, families and people with lived experience of the issues being investigated is critical (McKenzie & Hansson, 2009). This includes recognizing the role of schools as knowledge-building organizations (Bereiter, n.d.; Cameron et al., 2010). In community-based research, the researcher and participants must overtly discuss the relationship between each other and come to a shared meaning of the research, otherwise the project will fail.

Making meaning in action research becomes participant-focused with the researcher acting as a guide. Harper (2000) notes, “Some sociologists have confronted the issue by giving up their own photography and instead teaching their subjects to use photography and writing to empower themselves” (p. 78). The participants are empowered since they select what pictures to take, they define what is important to them, and they select which story or stories to tell and how to tell them. Perhaps most important of all, they experience that who they are, what they see and live through is as important as that of the researcher. This shift in power structure has additional positive outcomes of building support systems. According to Bernajean Porter (personal communication, May 3, 2010) teachers can use digital storytelling to build a learning community based on safety and trust. This also meets many of the goals of promoting resilience, as students develop supportive relationships with their peers and teacher allies.

Such is the experience of Brendtro, Mitchell, and McCall (2009) in their work with youth typically considered *at risk*. Brendtro et al. (2009) explain the numerous benefits of researching through stories:

We understand how profoundly we learn from these relationships with each other as well as through the relationships with participants. By giving voice and making visible our

stories of our experiences in relation with participants, we created a space in which to tell our stories, hear others' stories, and give these stories back to each other with new insight. (p. 83)

3.4.2 Photovoice

A number of theoretical considerations behind Photovoice as a method of participatory research were integrated into the storytelling process and strengthen the rationale for using photos as a valuable element of the student-generated information. The benefit of using visual representations with youth whose first language is not English is the initial consideration. But in addition, anti-oppressive research reframes and places value on youth-generated information. To attain this objective, however, the typical processes of Photovoice were modified in this project to meet the needs of the research setting. Principles of social justice underpinning Photovoice are relevant to studies with EAL students whose voices have previously been silenced by limited language and by the negative societal values that they encounter (Feuerverger & Richards, 2007).

Understandably, EAL students who are developing their language skills, often find it difficult to articulate their thoughts (Owen & English, 2005). With the aid of photographs and art, children can convey emotions and past experiences without the use of written text (Brendtro et al., 2009). The addition of images can serve to enhance description because words are often vague, but images are full of meaning (Kress, 2004). By using storytelling, dialogue, and metaphoric expression as research methods, each respondent is recognized as a stakeholder in the process that enables researchers to acknowledge the complexities of language and culture (Johnson et al., 2008).

Michelle Fine brings together theories of anti-oppressive research and Photovoice on the website WhatKidsCanDo.org. Two principles behind the project are: what happens in the classroom should connect to the world, and youth have the capacity to create new knowledge. The site offers a range of student projects including PowerPoint presentations, videos, and student-produced books that highlight youths' relevant issues and the energy young people devote to change. Fine's perspective is very applicable to this study, but the process of Photovoice required modification for use with EAL students.

The main tenet of Photovoice is that the research participants become photographers and tell stories about those photos (Kress, 2004; Pallibroda, Krieg, Murdock, & Havelock, 2009). In this study, this was not possible for most of the youth who told stories about pre-migration experiences. Two of the students who arrived as immigrants brought photos taken in their home countries, but youth who arrived as refugees had very few tangible reminders of their previous lives. Student participants who told stories about life in a refugee camp were able to find some internet-based photos, but the photographs were protected by copyright, so they were not included in this document.

Fine et al. (2007) and Palibroda et al. (2009) inspired me to offer the student- participants novel ways such as Photovoice as well as written and oral storytelling to express their needs, worries, and strengths. Traditional research methods such as personal interviews also met my goal to promote trust because a constructionist approach "necessitates a relationship with respondents in which they can cast their stories in their terms" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 525). The interview process was left open-ended so that student and teacher participants could tell the stories that were of the most importance to them.

3.4.3 The Interview Process

To complement classroom-based storytelling, I conducted personal interviews with six of the eleven students and the three teacher participants. Using a semi-structured format with open-ended questions to create a conversational atmosphere and “listening to [participants’] stories with openness to feeling and experience” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 525), my goal was to elicit narratives of knowledge (Schwandt, 2007). This strategy is supported by Fontana and Freys’ (2000) position that in the unstructured interview, human relations are built because the researcher strives to understand rather than explain the “complex behaviour of members of society without imposing a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry” (p. 653). A further intention to explore the research method as a means of emotional support for immigrant and refugee youth became more intriguing after reading the accounts of Herta Herzog’s groundbreaking qualitative interviews.

Herzog (as cited in Gladwell, 2009) found that the qualitative interview had the potential to increase wellbeing similar to a counselling session:

It was interviewing not with direct questions and answers but where you open some subject of the discussion relevant to the topic and then let it go. You have the interviewer not talk but simply help the person with little questions like, ‘And anything else?’ As an interviewer, you are not supposed to influence me. You are merely trying to help me. It was a lot like the psychoanalytic method. (p. 94)

This information led me to believe that the interview process could potentially include a healing dimension, and reflected my desire to not only *do no harm but do good* (Michael as cited in Crown, 2009). My past experience, however, made me acutely aware that the nature of the interview could also be upsetting for participants.

This realization developed in my first years of studying to acquire a certificate in teaching English as an additional language. One of my assignments was to conduct an interview with an EAL learner. I enlisted the assistance of a friend who taught adult learners who, in turn, found an adult student volunteer. Arrangements were made for us to use a small conference room not far from the classroom. I met the student, and we chatted for a bit before making our way to the designated location. As we entered the small, windowless room, I set the tape recorder on the table and turned to the student volunteer who had turned ashen and hoarsely whispered, “Don’t ask me any political questions.” It was a powerful moment that remains etched in my mind. Unknowingly, I had created a situation that caused another person significant emotional distress. Reflecting on that early experience, I was determined to avoid placing the participants for this project in such a situation.

With Miss O.S.’s assistance, I was able to conduct the interviews with the ELA 20 students in a small room next to the students’ classroom during class time. One adult-aged student asked to be interviewed while walking outdoors where he felt most comfortable sharing his personal thoughts. At the beginning of the project, I offered the services of a translator, but no one asked for one. Being respectful of the students’ choices, I did not insist on having a translator present. Two teachers were interviewed at school and one asked to be interviewed at home. The interviews were recorded with a small digital recorder. Although I was prepared to take notes, the engaging nature of the stories was all consuming, and I wrote very little. The interviews were transcribed and returned to the participants for approval. For one student with extremely low literacy levels in first and second languages, the power of seeing his words in print was an emotionally joyful experience. He appeared to be thrilled by the thick stack of paper when he said, “I can’t believe I said all this. I love it. It’s like a conversation.” Other

participants made changes, deleted sensitive information, or rephrased statements. Respecting the participants' choices in all aspects of the interview process was of critical importance to me. As a result, there were differences in my interview contact with each person.

Two students were unavailable for interviews because of relocation, one student finished school and left no forwarding contact, and two students declined. Four students and three teachers were interviewed once; one student was interviewed twice; and one student was interviewed three times. These differences in number of interviews occurred for several reasons. Some student participants needed more time to tell their stories, but the necessity of going to the next class constrained their interview time with me. As I transcribed the interviews and pondered participants' comments, further questions developed that directed the data collection (Charmaz, 1995). For example, Pearl's verbal pondering regarding her upcoming trip to Pakistan opened up a new conversation about identity and attachment to land and culture. This led to a follow-up interview after her return to Canada. Similarly, Adnan's stories about friends targeted by gangs presented an occasion to learn more about pressures of youth to become involved in illicit activity. His eagerness to share stories led to two follow-up interviews that provided opportunities for him to speak until he told me he was finished. Since the goal of the study was to understand the experiences of youth, the strategy to give students the time each needed proved effective in producing rich findings in which participants defined their experiences. This is best exemplified in my conversations with the classroom teacher, Miss O.S..

Most days after class Miss O.S., the teacher of the sheltered English Language Arts class, met with me for a very informal interview. Together, we reviewed the classroom discussions, shared our perceptions of the students' interests in storytelling, and reflected on the impact of the

students' stories. The after-school discussions with Miss O.S. were a valuable supplement to the classroom observations which I describe in the next section.

3.4.4. Classroom Observations

In addition to collecting information through students' writing projects and personal interviews with students and teachers, I observed the sheltered grade eleven English language arts (ELA 20) class taught by Miss O. S.. Throughout this five-month, secondary school semester, I generally sat at the table with the students and took notes. I participated in the conversations and discussions when requested by the teacher. During brainstorming sessions, I acted as a recorder for the class by creating thought webs on a flipchart. As the students became more comfortable with my presence, I helped individual students with pronunciation during personal reading time and answered questions about spelling or paragraph writing. This was a slightly different model than I had originally envisioned.

My initial plan was to orchestrate a recorded focus group or sharing circle scenario, but the introduction of the data recorder changed the openness of the classroom environment. Although no students voiced opposition to my request to audio record the class discussions, I observed a reluctance to share once the machine appeared. My research objective was to observe the class as closely as possible, in a natural learning environment, and not let my research objectives or structure interfere with the normal operation of the class. My aim to not only do no harm but rather *to do good* superseded my original plan. Therefore, using the recorder was counterproductive, so I abandoned the method and returned to observations and note-taking. As a result, my daily meetings with Miss O.S. became essential.

In addition to being a time for reflection, our daily meetings gave me an opportunity to verify my notes. Had I really understood what a student had said? Were my observations

correct? What had I missed? This multi-method approach using participants' writing, personal interviews, class observations, and reflection provided rich, nuanced, and compelling information with real life resonance (Mason, 2007). The next challenge was to analyze the findings and understand the stories.

3.5 Understanding Stories: Interpreting Narratives

The process of interpreting narratives brings into focus the researcher's own life-guiding principles and philosophy. The final stages of the research process is the convergence of my epistemological stance as a social constructionist, my passion for narratives, my commitment to social justice in education, and my role as an adult ally for youth on the margins of society. Philosophical perspectives, models and theories affect the way people see themselves and change what they attempt to explain. There is a *messiness* (Reicher, 1999) or complicated nature to the interpretative process. Schwandt (2007) explains:

Theoretical or analytical generalizations do not rely on the logic representative sampling. . . . [T]he criterion used to select cases from which one will generalize is not their representativeness [but rather] the extent to which they contribute to supporting and refuting the argument . . . being developed by the researcher. (p. 127)

My purpose is to provide opportunities for naturalistic generalization (Stake as cited in Schwandt, 2007) by providing richly detailed, personal narratives with which a reader can interact vicariously. As a qualitative researcher, my goal is not to prove results, but rather to share observations, and leave generalizations of interpretations to the reader (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The transferability of findings varies according to the interests of each reader. How I interpret the participants' narratives is also of significance.

Using an inductive model based on grounded theory, I started with participants' personal stories, experiences, and perspectives and used a systematic strategy to identify abstract categories and themes that emerged (Charmaz, 1995) and to further refine these in a series of analytical steps. Constructivist grounded theory closely aligns with my personal perspectives because it:

[C]elebrates firsthand knowledge of empirical worlds . . . and offers accessible methods for taking qualitative research into the 21st century. Constructivism assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510).

The process of using NVivo 9 software to code the written and transcribed narratives assisted me in seeing the participants' words in a new light. I read the transcribed interviews and the written submissions of student participants line by line. Sentences and phrases were then copied and pasted into the NVivo program where they could be grouped according to themes. Based on the students' stated perspectives I placed the factors in two basic categories: a) the events and experiences, and people the youth identified as negative and b) the events, experiences and people found to be positive. As I continued to sift through the narratives, I further refined the categories: negative events and experiences prior to migration; negative events and experiences in Canada; positive experiences, events, and people in students' countries of origin; positive events, experiences and people in Canada. My classification mirrored factors of risk and resilience outlined in the current literature (see Cameron et al., 2010; McAdam-Crisp, 2006; Unger, 2008). While this realization was affirming because my findings were reflected in the

literature, I also found the process somewhat unsettling because I was making decisions without the input of the participants.

A study rooted in a constructionist paradigm requires a varied standard of appropriate evaluation (Morrow, 2005). The task of creating categories and subcategories was subjective, and I wondered if the students would have agreed with my choices. On many occasions I had to ponder which category or how many categories in which to place a student's comment. For example, the reunification of mother and child, which we generally perceive as a positive event, was at first a negative event but later a positive factor for a particular student participant. Because of this reunification, however, the student was taken out of school to assist her mother and younger siblings move to another province, which the student found very upsetting. Another challenge was to decide where to place a youth's involvement in theft. Although the act of stealing is generally seen as a factor contributing to risk, the student described his participation in illicit activity as a means to help his family survive and thus as a positive action. Due to end of the term time constraints and loss of contact with students who moved, I was unable to ask students for their input on my coding choices.

As a researcher with drastically different life experiences than the student participants in this study, I find constructionist theories of reality particularly helpful in making sense of students' stories. Ungar (2004) postulates that a constructionist research paradigm is well-suited to studies of resilience which is a process of "negotiations between the individual and the environment" (p. 24). Researchers who use a constructionist lens employ an epistemological approach which defines reality as unfixed and recognizes that judgments about how the world should look are based on power structures. Since I am aware of the power of mainstream culture and the potential for misrepresenting the student participants in my own perception of reality, I

struggled to come to terms with ways to interpret the participants' narratives and to be faithful to their perspective.

I recognize that the process of interpretation is essential for academic research that can contribute to a deeper understanding of the situation under study. This "canon of good practice and ways of assessing validity" (Stiles, 1993, p. 593) makes research believable and useful to parties beyond those who participated in doing it. In retrospect, I believe that being distanced from the intense atmosphere of the interview and observation setting gave me the opportunity to look at the narratives more critically and less emotionally. By using grounded theory I had opportunities to generate knowledge grounded in the experiences of the participants and become aware of my personal biases, understanding, and reflections (Charmaz, 2000; Ungar, 2004). My cognizance of the complicated nature of interpretation also influenced the way in which I presented the findings.

To assist readers develop an accurate portrayal of students with interrupted education and to honour the knowledge of youth who are often excluded from research (Fine et al., 2007), I present the student participants' oral and written narratives with minimal editing. To clarify the context of the participants' statements, I provide large segments of their narratives and the circumstances in which they were created. Finally, I put forward my understanding of the data in story form because "we live in a storied world [and] we interpret the actions of others and ourselves through the stories we exchange" (Murray, 2003, p. 95). I reflect on the meaning of the stories through a social constructionist lens with the understanding that culture influences how we interpret the world (Crotty, 1998).

In conclusion then, this chapter presented the choice of methodology and my personal goals, perspectives, and queries that formed my choice of methodology as a researcher. By

reviewing the aspects of social justice and anti-oppressive theories, I explained my decision to develop an action research project and the challenges of finding an appropriate research setting. In an effort to move away from colonizing practices, I melded my words with excerpts from the participant-generated narratives to create a short, storied introduction of each participant. However, the evolving number of participants, the unique needs of the students and the research setting, required that the multi-method approach be open to improvisation and modification. Finally, as a researcher striving to interpret and understand the stories of the participants, I was challenged to find methods of analysis that would mesh with my constructionist stance. Each of these factors influenced the production of the resulting narratives which are represented in the next four chapters. Through the narratives of youth who experienced interrupted education and forced migration, teachers, school administrators, policy makers, and Canadian citizens in general will have a better understanding of the factors that create barriers to integration as well as the positive influence of opportunities that increase youths' capacity to be resilient.

Chapter Four

Students' Stories of Academic and Social Risk

In Chapters Four to Seven, I present findings from the research generated through classroom observations, personal interviews, students' written submissions, and in-class oral storytelling. My interpretation of the youths' and teachers' stories resulted in two general themes: a) the accumulation of risk factors (Garbarino & Kostelney, 1996) that negatively influence youths' capacity to integrate, and b) the people, strategies, and personal attributes that support youth to be resilient when facing challenges (Cameron et al., 2010; Unger, 2008). Tables 4.1 and 4.2 are introductory visual representations of the factors identified by the student- and teacher-participants. Each point is explained in detail through the participants' narratives and my reflections. I have provided back ground information or context to the youths' narratives in an effort to avoid creating negative stereotypes that may arise in discussions of risk. From my perspective, risk factors are easily categorized as events or situations that occurred in the home country or country of refuge as opposed to situations in Canada. Conversely, factors that support resilience transcend geographical boundaries. Factors such as family support or religious values were evident in both pre- and post-migration stories. For this reason, I have not specifically categorized resilience factors in relation to a migration timeline but rather to subheadings of academic, personal or social supports.

Table 4.1. *Factors that contribute to the accumulation of risk: Identified by students*

Factors that contribute to the accumulation of risk Identified by students					
In home country or country of refuge			In Canada		
educational	social	emotional	educational	social	emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interrupted education •Violent discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Poverty and difficult life •War and political unrest •Family separation and reunification •Violence •Relocation •Illegal activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Trauma •Mistrust •Loss of hope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Not enough English •Not doing homework or school work •In trouble at school •Pressure to graduate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Feeling unwelcome •Cultural misunderstandings •Family problems •Poverty •Illicit activity •Separated from family and friends •Not involved in sports and clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Feeling lonely, bored •Identity confusion •Mistrust •Unable to sleep •Coping with weather

Table 4.2. *Factors that contribute to resilience: Identified by students and teachers*

Factors that contribute to resilience identified by students			Factors that contribute to resilience Identified by teachers		
academic	social	personal	academic	social	personal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Values education •Teacher ally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Empathetic and social justice concerns •Family •Friends •Independent and outgoing •Politically aware •Religion •Settlement supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Attachment to home country and culture •Attachment to Canada •Future plans •Positive attitude •Strategies to resist illicit activity •Humorous •Fun-loving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •English skills •Willingness to take academic risks •Strong work ethic •Teacher ally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Attachment to country •Family •Friends •Maintains cultural traditions •Politically astute •Religion •Sports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Attachment to home country and culture •Personable •Capacity to adapt •Goal for the future •Fun-loving and humorous

Although researchers using grounded theory typically report results using minimal citations from the data, I chose to follow the style of Charmaz (1995) who recommends

including participants' quotes in the final report in an effort to keep the human story in the forefront of the reader's mind. Considering that narratives are socially constructed (Murray, 2003), I include the context for the participants' quotations. As a result, the following chapters take on a story quality, which aligns with the recommendations of Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, and Orr (2009): "Narrative inquiries can begin with the telling of stories or the living out of stories, a living out that may later involve the telling of stories of the experience" (p. 82). While the themes of the stories take many directions, the elements of risk and resilience emerged as common themes to the students' written and oral narratives.

I move from these particular experiences of the students and teachers to their own analysis of the social context, drawing links to anti-oppressive literature (Cornell & Hartman, 2007; Garbarino & Kostelny, 1996) and the importance of including youths' voices in the process of identifying students' academic and social needs. This chapter will focus on academic and social risk factors.

The disadvantages of not having English skills when entering primarily English-speaking western Canada are obvious, but less apparent are the academic and social risks factors caused by poverty, violence, and relocation. Beginning with academic risk, I present students' stories of factors that negatively affect school success. This includes the need for English, interrupted or limited formal education, and pressure to graduate. Second, I present the students' stories of social risk factors, which include pre- and post-migration experiences. Student-identified social risk factors include: persecution, poverty and illicit activity; relocation, fractured families, and loss of strong ties; the absence of social networks and weak ties; and cultural confusions. Following this, I discuss how the combination of negative educational and social experiences

both prior to and after arriving in Canada contributes to the accumulation of risk for youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees.

4.1 Academic Risk

For youth whose education has been disrupted because of the social conditions in their countries of origin, the term *interrupted* is commonly used. However, this idiom does not sufficiently describe the situation of youth who are restricted in their educational opportunities prior to immigration. Freeman et al. (2002) use the terms “newly arrived with limited formal schooling” (p. xiii) or “long-term English learners” (p. x) to avoid labels connoting deficiency when describing youth who face tremendous barriers in reaching the academic equivalent of their Canadian peers.

Academic risk factors grounded in the student-generated narratives include pre- and post-migration experiences. The subsections of this topic include the need for English; interrupted or limited formal education; and pressure to graduate. Next is a discussion section in which I reflect on the consequences of undeveloped English language skills. Thus, a combination of educational experiences both prior to and after arriving in Canada contributes to the accumulation of risk for youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees.

4.1.1 The Need for English

When asked what youth need when they come to Canada, a common response from the student participants was the necessity to learn English. The youths’ opinions aligned with the literature reviewed for this study. English competence was identified as being critical to immigrant and refugee youth’s academic success, integration into English Canadian society, and

emotional wellbeing (Chettleburgh, 2007; Phan, 2002; Pirbhai-Illich, 2005; Watt & Roessingh, 2001).

The student participants in this study identified many limitations caused by developing language skills. Despite the diversity of students' first language educational experiences, the circumstances under which they arrived in Canada, and their current economic situation, the need for English was common to all. Oscar and Halwa spoke of the general, everyday need to communicate in English. Halwa succinctly wrote in a journal entry for grade 10 Computer Processing (CP10), "*[L]ife is not easy it is difficult if you can't speak any English.*" Oscar said, "*[When people] first come to Canada, hard to talk, hard to find house and if he have children have to find a school because English not good enough. Hard to find a job. I think that's what worry about.*" Other students provided specific, personal examples of language barriers and challenges.

Although Marty had achieved a high level of educational success in Iran, he explained that classes in Canada were difficult because he had not acquired the level of English necessary for academic study. "*For example math exam if I don't write it, it is about my English not about my math. I don't know how to solve it.*" The student participants in this study identified many limitations caused by the need to enhance their English language skills.

The students had created individual indicators to describe the effect of not being able to communicate with members of their new country. Tim Tom lamented that when he first arrived, he was not even able to order coffee at Tim Horton's. In Loso's case, his family was first settled in an area of Toronto where they felt isolated because "*there are no Somali people. We don't understand them. They don't speak Arabic, Turkish and Somali. They only speak English.*" The inability to communicate led his family to relocate. YG used a somatic reference to describe

his situation: *“The first day we didn’t know English pretty much. So we feeling very sick.”*

Feelings of seclusion left youth feeling despondent because being socially connected is so important to youth (TheTeenDoc.com, 2011). The stress of not having adequate language skills was amplified when students also struggle because of interrupted and limited formal education.

4.1.2 Interrupted and Limited Formal Education

Notwithstanding the fact that all eleven student participants had interruptions in education simply because of the migration process, the vastly different first language educational experiences clearly influenced the youth’s capacity to acquire a grade twelve diploma in Canada. The primary challenge was to achieve language for academic purposes before reaching 22, which is the mandatory exit age from Saskatchewan secondary school. Considering the median time of 5.5 years required to gain sufficient English to be successful in school (Helmer & Eddy, 1996), students who arrived at the age of sixteen or older with very little English were restricted by time. The province of Saskatchewan does not provide any provincial statistics regarding the school drop-out rate for EAL students; however data from the University of Ottawa indicates a drop out rate of one in five youth who arrive during high school years (Corak, as cited in Elliot, 2011), which leads one to expect a rather discouraging outcome.

In addition to the delays caused by the need to develop language skills, different national standards put youth further behind their expected graduation date. This was spoken about by Oscar and Tim Tom. Oscar bemoaned the fact that when he emigrated from China to Canada, he needed to do high school again, and Tim Tom, who came from a German technical school program, *“had to do two more years of school”* in Canada. Considering that Oscar and Tim Tom faced huge obstacles even though they arrived from countries with well developed education systems, it is understandable how difficult education was for youth who arrived from

countries with scarce academic resources. For students who had to acquire both language and subject content because of extremely limited education prior to entering Canada, the length of time needed in school was considerably longer.

As a result, secondary students who arrive with high literacy needs face tremendous barriers to graduate by the mandatory high school exit age (Freeman et al., 2002; Pirbhai-Illich, 2005; Short & Boyson, 2012). My observation is that the risk of academic failure is inversely proportional to the amount of education obtained prior to arrival in Canada. To support this hypothesis, next, I contrast two examples of youth who experienced brief academic interruptions and strong elementary school experiences with the experiences of three youth who received very little first language education.

An example of early arrival to Canada was the student with the pseudonym November, who at the age of eight, could not attend school in Pakistan for a short time as the family disposed of their belongings and moved to an intermediate location prior to migration. By the age of seventeen, November's English was well developed, and he often provided spelling, grammar, and vocabulary support to his sheltered English 20 (ELA 20) classmates. November was observed staying after school to read three hundred-page novels which he discussed with his EAL teachers. Through these observations and discussions with November and his teacher, I posited that November's brief academic interruption was not a great risk factor in his life. Even so, it was unclear why, after nine years of education in Canada, November continued to struggle academically and socially. In fact, when asked to identify what students need when they arrive in Canada, November answered, "*I don't know what I need.*" This led me to consider anxiety rather than interrupted education as the predominant factor that contributed to risk in November's situation.

A second example of interrupted education being a low risk factor was provided by Sandman who was compelled to discontinue his university studies when his family obtained permission to immigrate to Canada. Sandman's strong academic foundation, comfort in the school milieu, and substantial English language ability facilitated his relatively easy integration into secondary school in Saskatchewan. Only a few days after arriving, Sandman presented me with his story *Immortal Soldier* which he wrote to express the traumatic events that led to his escape from Iran. Sentences such as: "*I came from the land of Persia, birth place of brave men and ancient legends*" and "*I still feel green in my heart, and I will keep fighting for my country and for human rights anyway I can*" showed Sandman's ease in expressing himself in writing and in English. After a month of auditing classes, Sandman began the second semester in academic classes where he contributed to class discussions and completed academic writing assignments. Sandman's brief education interruption occurred after he had reached a high level of academic achievement, so that he quickly regained his momentum in the classroom.

Conversely, the most profound examples of interrupted education were given by three of the students who arrived as refugees with significant limitations to education in their home countries and countries of refuge. These students were YG, who was raised in a Thai refugee camp, and Saudi Arabia-born brothers Adnan and Loso, who attended religious schools where academic instruction was limited. These student participants talked and wrote about the lack of school facilities and supplies, restricted school access due to poverty or national status, and the harsh punishments meted out by teachers. Showing great insight and maturity, the youth identified the consequences of inadequate or interrupted schooling.

In his writing assignments for the grade eleven English Language Arts class (ELA 20), YG described school conditions in the Thai refugee camp:

There were too many kids. It was noisy because there were no walls. There were long tables, so four or five students had to squeeze together. . . . They wrote on thin paper. If they erased a mistake, there would be a hole in the paper.

YG also wrote how poverty and lack of resources negatively affected children's opportunity to gain an education in the refugee camp: *"Some of the student can't go to school when the school beginning. Because they're parent very poor and also they have too many brother and sister."*

Loso and Adnan's education was restricted because of national status. As the children of illegal Somali migrants in Saudi Arabia, school experiences were limited. Loso explained that his formal education consisted of Somali-run religious schools (Duksee) and Arabic-based religious schools (Madrassa):

I didn't go to school in the morning. Me and Adnan and [an older brother] were too old, so we went to school at 7 in the evening. We went to Duksee School in the morning. We went home for lunch and came back after 30 minutes. We just sat on the floor. The teacher told us to take the small children by the hand and take them home. Then we went back to Duksee School. There were so many kids, we had to take some home, go back to school, and take others home. We went home at 6 in the evening. Then we went to Madras school.

The sharp contrast in the academic needs of these five youth was startling.

Meeting the academic needs of youth with interrupted or no first language education created considerable challenges when students simultaneously learned language and subject content (Freeman et al., 2002; Pirbhai-Illich, 2005). This was articulated by Adnan, who had very little first language education, so trying to cope in a math class developed for the trades was very difficult:

It wasn't good because I had to ask my teacher. I need someone to make me understand better. To explain it for me, but she couldn't, and I couldn't understand some words, so that's why I failed. . . . It was fast. We learn the full day and next week we have an exam.

This glimpse into the school experiences of YG, Loso, and Adnan, in addition to observations in the ELA 20 class, led me to concur with Phan (2002) that youth who arrive with extremely limited education are placed at a high risk of academic failure. Without academic English youth are unable to participate fully in age-appropriate academic classes. Teachers responsible for meeting the literacy needs of older teenagers and young adults often struggle to find materials with beginning level vocabulary that are interesting and not child-like. Such were the challenges faced by Miss O. S. and the students of the modified English Language Arts class.

After three years in Canada, YG's English was not sufficient to cope in academic classes. As he approached his twenty-second birthday, YG had not finished enough classes to be granted the standing of a modified grade eleven. With less than two years of education in Canada, Loso and Adnan had attained a level of spoken English or basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) to communicate with teachers and peers. However, their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) remained limited, so the demands of the ELA 20 class were far beyond their linguistic abilities in English. At eighteen and nineteen years of age respectively, their mathematical skills were also insufficient to complete a grade ten class for students interested in the trades.

Besides struggling to gain English and mathematics skills, Loso and Adnan grappled with the culture of school. For example, Loso theorized, *"If I don't go to school my English is better. In Turkey I don't go to school, and I learn like crazy. But school is important."* As the ELA 20

teacher Miss O.S. reflected, although Loso could extol the virtues of punctuality and making wise choices, he was only intermittently able to put concepts into action.

This school capital or the knowledge of school rules, behaviour requirements, and ways to learn effectively are acquired only in school. When youth arrive without previous formal school experience, they are immediately placed in challenging situations because they do not have the school capital to be successful. The tacit rules, expectations, and specific skills for learning in a structured setting are not easily acquired vicariously because the explanation for such rules are not obvious to culturally different persons (Cornell & Hartman, 2007). However, academic assessment continues to be based on skills and knowledge obtained in a middle class, predominately European-based culture. Consequently, education has not become the great panacea that provides upward mobility for everyone, (Helmes-Hayes & Curtis, 1998). Youth with interrupted and limited education require extended time in school to gain knowledge of English and course content in addition to learning how to learn in Canadian schools, and yet young people new to Canada are under great pressure to graduate.

4.1.3 Pressure to Graduate

Despite the need for more English language development and extra time to achieve Canadian secondary school requirements, the students spoke of the great pressure to graduate as quickly as possible. Tim Tom wrote, *“I want to finish school quick so I can get a good job.”* When I asked Oscar how he felt about staying in EAL until his English was better, he answered, *“I think if younger OK, but when you old you stay in ESL for 3 or 4 years it’s too long to start English [Language Arts].”* The dilemma Oscar also recognized was that without more English, he could not be successful in academic classes: *“He not understand he not pass the class. He just use the time and nothing got it.”* Correspondingly, Pearl’s answer to the same question

regarding staying in EAL until her English was more developed showed the frustration of being over eighteen with limited English language skills:

Right now, I can't take any ESL classes because I have five classes and I need them five. If someone is like it's necessary to have 5 or more classes, how can I have ESL classes? It's important to be like 5 classes now and 5 classes next semester to graduate. If I'll have one ESL now and 4 classes next semester, I won't be able to graduate, and I NEED them because I have to go to university or I want to be like graduate, and then I'll do [a] course.

During personal interviews with the student participants, it became clear that many youth experience this great burden to succeed. Pearl's observation that *"every person want to be doctor I guess"* demonstrated that the pressure to be successful was not limited to the youth in this study.

For Oscar, the pressure to succeed was attached to his Chinese name which means that his parents want him *"to do everything better than other people."* From the students' statements, I surmised that parents of EAL students were unaware that their children needed more time to learn English before achieving such high levels of education and employment. This disparity between youth's level of English acquisition and their parents' expectations was not uncommon. According to Gunderson's study of immigrants to Vancouver (as cited in Read, 2004), parents overestimated their children's language skill despite the fact that most teenage immigrants in his study arrived with a grade two level of English. Ironically, Adnan's words showed that he had identified an important language-learning factor that some parents had missed: *"People are new to Canada everybody knows the language is hard for them to learn."*

[I]t takes more time.” The students also offered insight into the social challenges faced by youth who are new to Canada.

4.2 Social Risk

As with education, both pre- and post-migration social experiences impact youths’ capacity to successfully integrate into society. In this section, I present the student-identified factors which negatively impacted their social lives: persecution, poverty, and illicit activity; relocation, fractured families, and the loss of strong ties; and secondary migration and small social networks. I contend that there are both pre- and post-migration social factors that unfavourably influence youth’s integration into Canadian society.

4.2.1 Persecution, Poverty, and Illicit Activity

When youth are excluded from social institutions or persecuted in the country of origin, there are damaging social, cultural, and psychological repercussions. Segregation of the youth’s cultural group from the dominant society creates a strong *us and them* distinction, thus weakening further the social capital between groups. The classification used to justify the denial of access to social institutions and benefits takes on great significance for people being persecuted (Cornell & Hartman, 2007; Geres, 2004).

In the case of the ethnic Somali youth born in Saudi Arabia, citizenship and subsequently school access were denied, forcing the Somali community to create alternative or *underground* schools. Adnan remembered, “*We had a lot of guys like Saudi guys say, ‘Get out of here you stupid guy, you black guy; get out of here, don’t come back to here; go back to your country.’*” As a result of such treatment, Adnan and Loso rejected Saudi culture, identified strongly with Somali culture, and created an imagined community (Anderson, 1991) regardless of the fact that they have never been to Somalia.

Being rejected by the dominant society also puts youth at risk when counter cultures offer welcoming support and acceptance to fill the void (Bruner, 1996; Ujimoto, 1999). These youth-constructed spaces of competence and alternative economies are often manifested as gang activity (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). The following two passages show how Adnan clearly identified the way in which restricted school access placed him in a tenuous situation, and how children left to their own devices band together to create a surrogate family:

*I've been [in country of birth] for 14 years, and they didn't let me go [to school].
When I was seven years old, they wouldn't let me go to school. They said I had to stop.
When I was 9 years old, worked mechanic; I learned to drive, to fix cars.*

I was in back home I didn't learn something . . . I was busy with my friends; we didn't go to school we used to play every day we didn't study to long. . . . And after that I used to hang around with bad people and steal and stuff like that. . . . So what we used to do, our friends, we used to go to rich places. Saudi Arabian people are rich, so we used to go knock the door and ask them for money. . . . Some people give 50, so we share together. We go to the store, everybody buy new shoes, new clothes, and after that everybody hungry . . . [In] Saudi Arabia they have Brooster . . . they sell chicken. We don't have money to buy it. We just look at the people eating, and when the people eat, when they leave we eat the leftover. Seriously, I was the person who get in and pick the food.

Adnan was very forthcoming about the illicit activity he had participated in while living in Saudi Arabia. Often he used the examples to highlight the plight of Somalis who had left their homeland. Other examples were given to clarify that he knew the difference between right and

wrong, and he followed an honest path whenever he could. Two of Adnan's written examples were as follows:

In the mosque, we walked without shoes. We'd go to the mosque and steal shoes. There were guys behind us saying, "Where are the shoes? Why did you guys steal shoes?" It's not a good thing.

One day, there were rich people who lived in a house called a villa. There were a lot of bikes and motorcycles. They went to other countries to visit. One guy came to us and said, "I have good news for you." "Okay, what is the good news?" "We have a lot of bikes and motorcycles for you." We walked with him, and he showed us the villa. This one guy he took the hanger and he opened it and made it tall and opened the door. When he opened the door, everybody started going into the villa. I was looking around to see who's coming. I thought these guys were taking a lot of bikes and motorcycles. And I thought, "What are they doing?" I started agreeing and took one bike. And after that, they wanted to steal some and sell them for cheap.

Unequivocally, Adnan became involved in stealing and begging as a survival strategy. He knew it was wrong, but he justified his actions by saying he took just enough to meet his needs.

It was unclear if he and his brother had post-migration involvement in illicit activity, but Adnan did talk about the opportunities and pressures presented by gangs in Canada:

They start from school every time. Person say, "Come. Hi, man what's up? Yeh, come to party. Want to join us, get high, drink?" and stuff like that. You gonna say "OK." They say, "You be us now." You want to go; they shot you, so what you going to do? You join them.

In Edmonton, Adnan felt the presence of gangs, and he recounted a story of being followed by a car when he took out the garbage late at night. In response to my question of who he thought was in the car, he answered:

Well gangs and stuff. Oh yeah. In Edmonton at that time, it was real tough. Lots of killing and stuff; lot of murders happening. . . . Those people were trying to kill me I think. They think I sell stuff, drugs and stuff. And they saw me 12 o'clock at night and they think, "That guy has something." You know.

He also talked about friends in Canada who were involved in what he referred to as "bad stuff":

They have a lot of issues and a lot of trouble. And at the end of the day they got killed. I have a friend in Winnipeg. He got killed two months ago. He wasn't dealing with drugs and stuff, but what he was doing, he used to hang out with those bad people, and he was standing by himself and smoking, and they just came and stab him by a knife, and he died. He was young; just 19 years old; too young.

Persecution and poverty in their country of origin placed Adnan and his brothers in a difficult situation, which resulted in the boys being involved in illicit activity as a survival strategy.

Following resettlement in Canada, Adnan and his friends were targeted by people involved in the drug trade. Adana and his brothers fit the stereotype on which gangs focus for recruitment.

Refugee families are known to have high financial needs because usually they arrive with no tangible assets and large travel loans that must be repaid to the federal government (Ngo, 2010).

Youth from countries with a high degree of violence are also considered viable gang members (MacDonald, 2007; Omar, 2008) because of their supposed tolerance to danger and familiarity with weapons. By virtue of their ethnic origin and immigrant status, Adnan and his brothers

became a valuable commodity for Canadian gangs. Other pre-migration factors continue to influence youth once resettled in Canada.

Previous experiences of persecution continue to have a negative effect after resettlement in Canada. Limitations to education and employment in the country of origin or refuge prevent youth from developing the labour market skills necessary for integration into Canadian society (Pressé & Thomson, 2007). Without adequate employment to meet everyday financial demands and debts such as the government travel loan, youth are placed in a high risk position. The prejudice and discrimination previously experienced creates “social traumata” (Suárez-Orozco, 2000), which can affect the mental and social adjustment of newcomers to the new country. Without a sense of belonging, youth feel like strangers and that society is not their society (Breton, 1999) and therefore become vulnerable to be drawn into groups that reward youth’s feelings of fear, loneliness, and cynicism (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1996; MacDonald, 2007).

Such was the scenario alluded to by Loso. Experiences of racism in Saudi Arabia resulted in Loso feeling distrustful and suspicious of Canadians who he perceived as being bigoted. With only one member of the family working, the younger siblings drifted into a dangerous circle of friends. Their mother, having little English and no first-language education, reverted to a previous strategy that would protect the five teenagers she was raising on her own; the family relocated: “*We moved from Winnipeg to [Saskatchewan] because my mom said, ‘You hanging around with bad kids’*” (Loso).

The instinct to flee in times of danger is a survival strategy that adversely impacts youth’s capacity to build and maintain supportive social networks. The next section addresses the negative impact of relocation, which includes fractured families and the loss of strong ties.

4.2.2 Relocation, Fractured Families, and Loss of Strong Ties

Relocation in search of a better life has a very high appeal for many in difficult situations, but it often comes at a high price. As is typical of refugee youth, the student participants recounted scenarios of forced migration that were undertaken in dangerous situations. Even students whose parents had willingly chosen immigration to Canada were affected by separation from the family members and friends who had offered support in difficult times. Many immigrants relocated after entering Canada, which further complicated matters; eight of the eleven youth relocated at least once in Canada before arriving in Saskatchewan. In addition to the difficulty of establishing new social networks, separation from loved ones caused the student participants great concern for those left behind and placed these young people in situations generally held by adults. Whether forced or chosen, relocation was a factor that added a great deal of stress on youth (Sher, 2010; Van Ngo & Schleifer, 2005) because important social networks and family supports were severed. Before these aspects are considered, I will first establish the significance of relocation for the current student participants.

Adnan, Halwa, Hamid, and YG, all of whom arrived as refugees, reported moving to a country of refuge before coming to Canada. The length of time in the transitional location varied from three to sixteen years. Adnan and his family fled under very difficult circumstances:

When I [went] to Turkey . . . I walked from country to country with my family. From Syria to Turkey. When we come close to the line [border], we see soldiers; we go back. If they catch you, you gonna live in the jail for all your life. Seven days, we used to sleep in the bushes. Who knows if there is snake? Who knows if there is dangerous animal? No one, because everybody is running for his future. Running for to find something.

Halwa told of a journey that took many years to complete: *“I was born in Somalia in 1992. . . . Then we moved in Kenya . . . I was 3 months old . . . I grew up there. . . . Then we moved to refugee camp. . . . We come to Canada in December 2008.”* Similarly, Hamid’s relocation story began when he was under one year old: *“By 1991, when my grandma died, there was nothing left for us, so [my father] decided to send us to Russia. The time went fast and by the age of 11 we were immigrated to Canada.”* The fourth student, YG, did not give details of his family’s move from Burma but wrote that his family *“ran to outside the village for a while”* when the Burmese soldiers came. Eventually, they relocated to a Thai refugee camp where they lived for twelve years before being sponsored by a Saskatchewan church group.

With relocation came separation from the family members and friends who could offer support or social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Li, as cited in Steinbach, 2007). Youth affected by forced migration were placed at risk without elders and extended family members to offer guidance and emotional support. Longing for loved ones and friends was a topic frequently initiated by the student participants in this study. Three years after relocating the family to Russia, Hamid’s father was killed, which left the remaining family members without support. Halwa’s mother went to Saudi Arabia to find employment, and Halwa stayed in Kenya with her grandmother. For youth whose family arrived as immigrants, the emotional toll of leaving loved ones was also painful. Although Marty knew his stay in Canada was temporary, he often wrote about being separated from his brothers:

When I came to Canada I really missed my brothers . . . I had different experiences and adventures with my brothers. We played, we fought. So I really want to go back to those times. Because it was one of the best parts of my life. I missed all those days.

Concern for family members left behind in dangerous or unstable situations caused students great anguish. Adnan and Loso's father and youngest brother were separated from the family some time during the migration process. The emotional aftermath was a common topic for Loso: *"My brother's name is [Ali]. He is my little brother. He is in Saudi Arabia. He is lonely he needs someone to be with him. I miss him so much."* For Sandman, who came to Canada with his immigrant parents, the anxiety of leaving close friends in the political turmoil of Iran was a burden with which he struggled to cope:

I'm trying to find all the ways I can bring my friends here because I know they're in a really, really bad situation. Lots of them are in jail. Lots of them been beaten, and everything is going worse every day. Ya, it's a really big issue. I think about them every night and day. I never stop thinking about them, but there's nothing I can do . . . [W]hen I'm not there, they're missing something. And they tell me that they need me. They call me, and they just want to talk to me. There's nothing I can do. There's nothing I can do . . . I'm half way around the planet.

Relocation also added to youth's accumulation of risk in Canada because the fractured family structure caused youth to take on responsibilities they otherwise would not face. Hamid became his mother's protector when she decided to return to Afghanistan to visit relatives. Thus, in his last year of high school, Hamid took a two-month leave of absence to accompany his mother on a dangerous journey in a war-torn country. He not only had to assume the adult role of protector and adult travel companion, but this trip also interrupted his last year of high school which could only have a negative effect on his academic performance. In Canada, Halwa acted as caregiver for her mother, while keeping in touch with her grandmother in Kenya. Adnan, the third of five siblings living in Canada, took on a parental role working two jobs after school,

disciplining younger siblings, and becoming the stabilizing force for the family. YG also worked full-time while going to school because his father could not find gainful employment here. To further complicate the lives of youth, many families did not settle in a permanent place immediately upon arrival in Canada.

Eight of the eleven students in this project had experienced secondary migration. It was surprising to realize how many of the student participants in this project would be affected by secondary migration even in the course of the brief period of one academic term used for this research. Pearl and November made their initial entry into Canada at Toronto to temporarily reside with relatives; they later moved to Saskatchewan. YG's family arrived via Vancouver, settled in Saskatchewan for approximately four years but moved to Edmonton in search of employment and affordable housing just as this research project neared the end of the narrative collection phase. For Halwa, family responsibility was more compelling than her own needs, and so she moved several times in two years. Halwa first moved from Alberta to Saskatchewan to help her younger sister and brother-in-law with their new baby. When her mother and younger siblings relocated from Alberta to Ontario, Halwa sacrificed her own desires for education and stability and planned another move at the end of the semester. She wrote to Mr. Jack in a weekly journal, *"I can't leave this city but the important thing is my mom needs help. So I think I am leaving [Saskatchewan]."*

Frequent moves were experienced by other students. At the end of the school year, which was also the close of this project's narrative collection phase, and less than two years since their arrival in Canada, Adnan, Loso, and their family were planning their fourth move. Adnan spoke the most about the unsettling consequences of moving from Ontario to Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and back to Ontario:

We're moving. [Our] family is living there in Kitchener, and they told my mom to come here and to live and said there's a school in here and jobs in here and your children gonna play soccer and all those kind of stuff. But it seems like for me, I wanna stay here.

Relocation occurred for various reasons, but regardless of the cause, youth were separated from important social support. As Sandman said, *"We came here for the freedom . . . and we really want the freedom, or we would stay in our country, and it would be much easier for us. Even we have friends there."* Relocation prior to emigration as well as resettlement in Canada placed both refugee and immigrant youth at risk because the networks of family and friends were broken. As a result, these youth not only lost important social connections and key mechanisms of social integration, but they also took on caregiver roles beyond their years. Showing great insight, Adnan articulated his desire to settle because *"first if you keep like moving around to different schools, that means high school is going to take you to[o] long,"* and *"if you go to a new school, you have to meet a new friends and all that kind of stuff. And that's hard for newcomers."* The loss and subsequent absence of social networks is such an important factor for these youths that it deserves more extensive consideration in the accumulation of risk for youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees.

4.2.3 The Absence of Social Networks and Weak Ties

The paucity of friendships and the difficulties in making friendships was discussed openly in the youths' class activities. During peer interviews for ELA 20, where Miss O.S. arranged the students in dyads and assisted the youth in developing appropriate questions, the students were forthcoming regarding their lack of friends. Although Pearl did not write about being lonely, in a personal interview with Adnan she was more candid. Adnan reported that, *"She said she has friends but not many friends."* Similarly, YG wrote about his peer partner's

lack of friends, related this to photos he had taken of him while on a field trip, and compared this to his own situation:

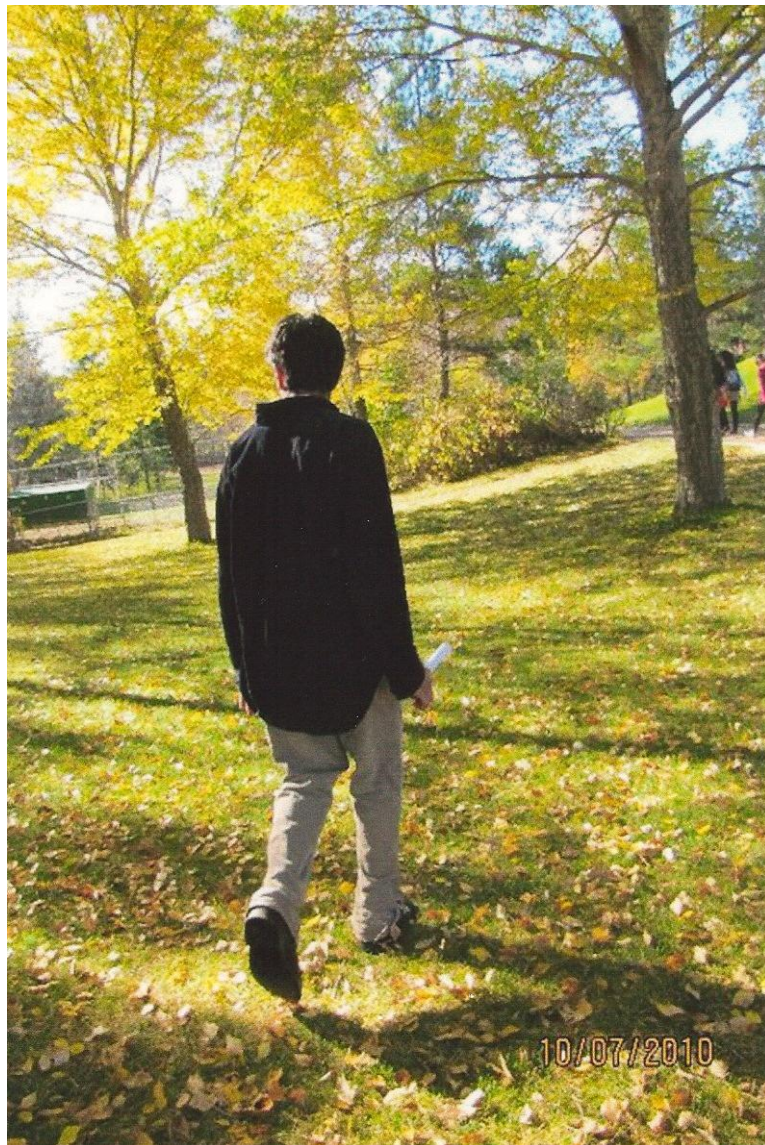


Figure 4.1. YG's photo of his friend.

H[e] have no friends and I think this is the truth because sometimes I have seeing hi[m] walk alone and reading alone. I think h[e] look like me when I came this school the first year. I don't have any friend too.

Another topic that emerged during the in-class peer interviews for English Language Arts (ELA 20) was the lack of involvement in school teams and clubs. Although the Saskatchewan high school in which the research was conducted offers numerous opportunities for extra-curricular activities, the youth in this study did not participate. After interviewing YG, November wrote, *“He plays no sports and has not joined any clubs.”* Marty discovered a similar situation when he interviewed Tim Tom: *“Tim Tom doesn't do any sports at [the school] but he likes soccer. His favourite subject is gym.”* This was also the case in YG's report of his partner: *“He said his favourite sport is soccer but he never plays soccer. But he said he likes to be with the soccer team.”*

The reasons for the student participants' lack of involvement were not always clear. It is possible that EAL students in this study were faced with the same barriers identified in an action research project conducted by The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement (2003) in Kitchener and Kingston, Ontario. In this report, the identified barriers for youth were money (80.4%), transportation (58.8 %), and not being encouraged by parents, teachers, or adult support workers (70%). The latter two reasons were also identified by Marty during a personal interview. I learned that Marty wanted to play basketball at school, but his mother was concerned about him commuting in the cold, dark Saskatchewan winter evenings. Marty was very anxious to make friends at school, but he was unaware of an after-school peer support group organized by one of the city's settlement agencies. Thus, Marty lamented, as did other student participants, that he felt bored and lonely.

Despite their great desire to integrate into society, feelings of boredom were a common topic for six of the student participants. Students' insights into the cause of their loneliness varied: Oscar attributed his isolation to lack of English and incompatibility with much younger

Canadian students; Halwa, Tim Tom, and Marty were unable to find social events to occupy their time; Pearl, Marty, and Sandman perceived Canadian youth as being unfriendly and unwilling to accept newcomers into their established groups.

Oscar found school boring without the ability to communicate, and because he was older than his Canadian classmates. In a critique of the book *Wimpy Kid*, Oscar compared the main character's experience to his own: *"I remember when I first came. I felt school time is bored, too. In Canada, I not have a lot of friends."* Oscar connected his level of English as well as his age to his capacity to make Canadian friends:

In here not very fun because here nothing to do. Because my English not very well . . . I can't take a friends in here. Maybe just talking with the Chinese people, but I'm old. I come here 17 years old and I sit in the high school and all the students 15 years old and now I'm 19 and all the students 17 years old. When I talk the kind I interesting, they not interesting. So it's very hard to talk and make the best friend.

Boredom was also a problem for Halwa. Accustomed to the crowded life of a refugee camp, the opportunities of Edmonton, and close contact with a large family, Halwa experienced loneliness and boredom in Saskatchewan. The following excerpts are from three of Halwa's weekend journals for Mr. Jack's class:

I didn't have that much fun. . . . I always work weekend but afternoon I am off I don't do anything. I went with my friends sometimes or I sleep. . . . So yesterday I went my friend house it was boring. I come back to my house my sister wasn't home it was nothing to do.

Similarly, Tim Tom and Marty found they had few activities to occupy their time. Tim Tom wrote about being bored when he first arrived: *"I didn't know anyone who could help me. I*

didn't even know how to get around in the city so I couldn't do anything except sitting at home."

Although his English language ability had grown immensely, Tim Tom's feeling of boredom remained. He reflected, "*[This city] is a very small and boring city. There is not really much to do here.*" Marty expressed his loneliness through the fictional story of a duck in Blue Lake. In the children's story he wrote for ELA 20, a young duck yearned for the companions in her former lake as the eventful summer turned to fall: "*It was getting boring. . . . She really missed her friends and family. She felt lonely there. She thought that this lake doesn't have anything interesting than the old lake.*" Besides the lack of activities to capture the interest of young people, the student participants identified other issues that contributed to their boredom and isolation.

The reasons for students' feelings of disengagement became clearer in personal conversations and interviews. Pearl related her disappointment with Canadian students who were not helpful to newcomers. She provided an example of a friend asking for directions in school:

She told me when she come here in this school, she didn't know where is gym, and she ask boy where is gym, where is way of gym, and he is, "Hmm". No response at all . . . [H]e was like, "Hmm, I don't know", and she was really upset. She said, "What is this? My school was not like this."

Correspondingly, Marty was very disappointed that he had not been welcomed by Canadian students since the custom in his Iranian school was to reach out to newcomers. In a reflective writing activity, Marty wrote, "*I found lots of Canadians unfriendly.*" When I asked Marty if anyone welcomed him at the Canadian school, he explained, "*There were some friendly people,*

but some were not; most of them were not.” In response to my query if he felt lonely, Marty answered, *“Yep and I think it is something common for a newcomer.”*

Sandman also felt that the high school atmosphere was not welcoming for newcomers:

If I wasn't with my brother, I would feel really, really, really lonely in that school. Like, I knew English. Just imagine someone who just came to Canada and doesn't know English and doesn't know anyone in that school who speaks Farsi. So that would be a big problem for him.

Sandman's explanation for the reluctance of Canadian students to welcome newcomers into their circle of friends was:

The groups are made even before they come to school, so they don't let anyone come in their groups. So it's kind of like you're always alone, and it's hard for someone who, how can I say it, is used to interacting with people all the time.

The loss and absence of social ties and the subsequent loneliness and boredom for these student participants comprise many dimensions as indicated above. In addition to these, however some of the student participants related the paucity of social opportunities to cultural differences and misunderstandings.

4.2.4 Cultural Confusions

Six students elaborated on cultural confusions between newcomers and Canadians. Two students reflected on the dissonance caused by religious differences. A particularly significant difference influenced by religion is female-male relationships, which was a frequent topic of conversation for five of the students in both class discussions and during personal interviews. Understandably since school plays a predominant role in the lives of youth, differences in school culture, relationships with teachers, and methods of discipline were frequently discussed.

Cultural confusions play a considerable role in separating Canadians from youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees.

Canadians' unfamiliarity with newcomers' religious practices was experienced by Halwa when she went to visit relatives in a small Saskatchewan city. In her weekend journal for Mr. Jack, she wrote this story of being invited to celebrate Christmas with a stranger she met in the mall:

[S]he said why you cover your hair. I said I am Muslim that why she said okay. She was so old and ask me a lot craz[y] question. . . . She said could you come my house in the kismets [Christmas] day I said no because I don't do kismets thing. She said what why not [I] said because I am muslin and we don't do kismets. She said ok [sic] and she give me bad look really bad one. I was so nervous. Then I left.

The lengthy journal entry continued as Halwa explained that at her job in a fast food outlet, she was also faced with explaining to customers why she does not celebrate Christmas:

[T]hen one day I was working front. This man came and say merry kismets I said merry kismets to [sic]. He said did you care [about] kismet. [I] was like no he said what why you not care . . . and he left he eve[n] didn't o[r]der anything he was talking when he left he was saying something but I didn't understand what he said about me he was mad. . . . I feel so bad I was saying sorry my manager.

Pearl also spoke openly about immigrants' cultural and religious practices that cause confusion for Canadians:

Every culture is different. Like your culture and mine. I'm not allowed to go to disc[o] or things like that, or music parties and things like that. . . . And if someone came here like a Muslim girl or boy, if it's a boy, then maybe it's OK, but if there's a girl, maybe not

OK. If she's alone here, and her family is away and she's going to disc[o] . . . her family will be feeling bad.

Like Pearl, other student participants found the culturally different expectations for male and female students of great interest.

A frequently written- and talked-about topic was male-female relationships. Marty reflected:

One of the most interesting discussions that we had in class was about dating and relations between girls and boys. Dating is different in most of country and it's because of religions, cultures and even history. . . . In Iran girls and boys are completely separate so they don't usually talk to each other, but here it's different. Boys and girls are together and they talk together. Coming to Canada made me to be with girls, talk to them and spend some times with them. As a teen boy I needed to have this experience. Being with girls taught me that girls are some weird types of human beings.

In a writing assignment for ELA 20, Adnan expounded on culturally different dating practices:

In my country there are different rules. The boys and girls can't be together in the street because it is not allowed. But they can date secretly. If the parents know about it that is going be a big problem. If the boy ask the parents to marry the girl, they will say yes. If they are dating and if something happened to the girl (sex or other stuff), the boy is going to be in big trouble. That's why dating is not allowed. But if the parents say yes, it is ok, it is good.

Sandman shared how he learned about what is considered to be acceptable Canadian female-male relationships:

A student from Korea . . . told me something that was interesting for me. He said, “The first day I came to school I was shocked that people, boys and girls, were kissing in the middle of the hallway.” So . . . it’s kind of like culture shock and confusing for the new students.

Such an example of culture shock arose in my first interview with Adnan. He expressed great confusion when he winked at a girl, and she misunderstood:

She said it was like I said, “Come with me.” It’s not from “Hi”? What’s that suppose to mean Ms. Geres? I was just joking around. I joke around too much. And I [was] just joking with her. I said “Hi, how you doing?” She said, “Adnan don’t talk to me.” I say, “Why?” She said, “Adnan, you give me a bad look.” This is ridiculous. This is getting too much, so I’m not going to talk to girls again.

The close contact of female and male students in addition to differences in acceptable school behaviour and general school-day routines caused youth a significant amount of distress. The most startling differences arose during discussions regarding school discipline.

Oscar remembered the experiences in China, *“The teacher always yelled, talk for a long time and give us a lot of homework. If you do something wrong, the teacher send you in the office.”* Adnan wrote the following story about the very strict and violent methods of punishment in his school in Saudi Arabia:

One day we were in the school. There was a little boy who made a mistake. The teacher brought a wire and tied his legs and put him up to the fan and started the fan. The boy went around. And when he put him down, his eyes were cross-eyed. Now he can’t see without glasses. That was sad.

The examples provided by the student participants demonstrated that youth desire more cross-cultural understanding between newcomers and Canadian-born people. Newcomer youth readily acknowledged the need for assistance with numerous new and difficult-to-understand practices in Canadian culture. November recommended that these youth need “*a translator*” who would be “*just someone a student could go to and ask questions whenever they need to.*” Many student participants also verbalized the need for Canadians to understand the challenges faced by newcomers. Adnan spoke of Canadians’ lack of empathy and awareness regarding the plight of refugees:

First day in Canada I was different from other people. . . . [Life] is hard but you have to think about it. Some people they don’t understand how hard it is but some people they living it. I lived in hard life with my family and friend we understand what’s the life is and how hard to make a better future.

The need for mainstream Canadians to understand the situation of newcomers to Canada is highlighted by researchers and advocates.

Since immigration is a two-way street (Beiser, 1999), the community’s attitude toward immigrants and refugees plays an important role in determining a sense of belonging. Long-time advocate for refugees in Saskatchewan, Helen Smith-McIntyre (as cited in Ledding, 2008) says, “We would really like people who were born in Canada to understand who refugees are, what they have been through and how much they need our welcome and support.” For immigrants as well as refugees, rebuilding social capital after relocation is critical to successful adjustment and a sense of wellbeing.

4.3 Discussion

This chapter presented examples of the ways in which restricted or interrupted education as well as negative social events and conditions prior to and after migration reduce youths' ability to be academically and socially successful. The student participants showed great insight by identifying factors such as restricted educational opportunities in their countries of origin, difficulty learning in Canada, and the need to settle and make connections in the community. The youth were also able to articulate abstract concepts such as cultural misunderstandings that negatively influenced their social interactions with others.

Arriving in Canada without the English language skills to resume academic study is a huge challenge for youth new to Canada, and the situation is exacerbated when youth have limited first language education. The paucity of pre-migration educational opportunities contributes to the accumulation of risk for immigrant and refugee youth in their post-migration schools. Those youths who arrive in Canada in their mid to late teens with little or no first language education, are considered at a high risk for academic failure (Van Ngo & Schleifer, 2005). I have been unable to determine the number of students in this category who arrive in Saskatchewan, and apparently no one collects such data, but it is known that in Canada in 2005, 48% of government assisted refugees (GARs) over the age of 15 had between 0 and 9 years of education (Yu et al., 2007). Students in this situation are faced with learning academic concepts and knowledge as well as language in all subject areas (Hood, 2007; Pirbhai-Illich, 2005). They also have to learn general academic knowledge that is not necessarily subject specific as well as general knowledge of their new society.

The skills that underpin these youths' ability to learn academic English and be successful at school are not typically learned outside of the school system and are therefore undeveloped or underdeveloped if they have received limited or no formal education. Without knowledge of the

tacit rules and expectations of school and of the new home society, refugees are put in a disadvantaged position (Cornell & Hartman, 2007; Morrice, 2007) as they learn the culture of school, such as being on time, caring for books and papers, taking notes, preparing for exams. Small tasks which have become common sense to Canadian-born students can be confusing to newcomers. For example, putting loose leaf the right way up in a binder and writing left to right on lined paper can be completely new experiences. All youth are under a great deal of pressure to be successful, to graduate quickly, and to gain a high level of employment or post-secondary education, but what is actually needed for these youth specifically is additional time in school. In particular, teenagers who arrive with limited first language education do not have enough time to gain the required skills to be successful before the mandatory Saskatchewan secondary school exit age. As suggested by researchers in the European Union, “Young migrants and refugees need special programmes to promote their participation and success in school and vocational training, such as language programmes and financial support to encourage higher education” (NGO Network of Integration Focal Points, 2006, p. 26). Newcomer youth need emotional support for problems that arise due to post migration issues and when negative pre-migration social experiences continue to affect newcomer youth after their arrival in Canada.

Pre-migration persecution and poverty led these youth to be suspicious of others, overly self-reliant, and involved in illicit activity as survival strategies. Relocation separated them from family and friends who could offer support and close social bonds. In one case this was caused by the Canadian government’s immigration regulation 117(9)(d), which created a category of “excluded family members [which] has a devastating impact on children, who are made to suffer because of the actions or omissions of their parents” (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2008). As a result, many of these youth took on many adult responsibilities in addition to attending school.

After arriving in Canada, families who continued to relocate within the country created situations in which their youths were forced to re-establish friendships and connections in the school and community. For many, few connections were made outside of their EAL classes, and there were many barriers to joining after school activities. Cultural misunderstandings often left these youths without peers and feeling unwelcome, bored, and lonely.

To illustrate the importance that the student participants place on social inclusion, Figure 4.2 shows the NVivo9-generated graphic comparison of student-identified risk factors. Although the graphic is not ideal, it is relevant in understanding what is most important to the youth in this study. The size of the rectangles indicates the frequency with which the youth participants spoke about each factor. I have added the numbers and corresponding list of factors for ease of understanding. Feeling unwelcome, not having enough English, and cultural misunderstandings were the three most frequently-mentioned post-migration issues. Most notable is the ratio of post-migration risk factors compared to pre-migration risk factors. Although Canadians may perceive risk factors prior to arrival in Canada as being of the utmost concern, the youth in this study spoke more frequently of negative social, emotional, and educational factors in Canada. According to the frequency of the student participants' statements, it can be theorized that feeling unwelcome in Canada was, above all else, the most important issue to the youth participants; not having enough English was second, and cultural misunderstandings with Canadians and other migrants was third. Based on the graphic generated from the findings, I posit that these three post-migration factors had a greater negative impact on youth than pre-migration relocation and trauma. I find this graphic particularly powerful, enlightening, and encouraging because adult allies have the capacity to positively influence change. We can work toward newcomer youth having a greater sense of belonging in Canada. We are able to provide

additional language support, and we can learn about cultures, inform our community members, and reduce cultural misunderstandings that put youth at risk. This knowledge relieves teachers, counsellors, school administrators, and Canadians in general from the burden of *fixing the past*, and helps us focus on what we can do, and what has the most significant impact on the wellbeing of youth new to Canada.

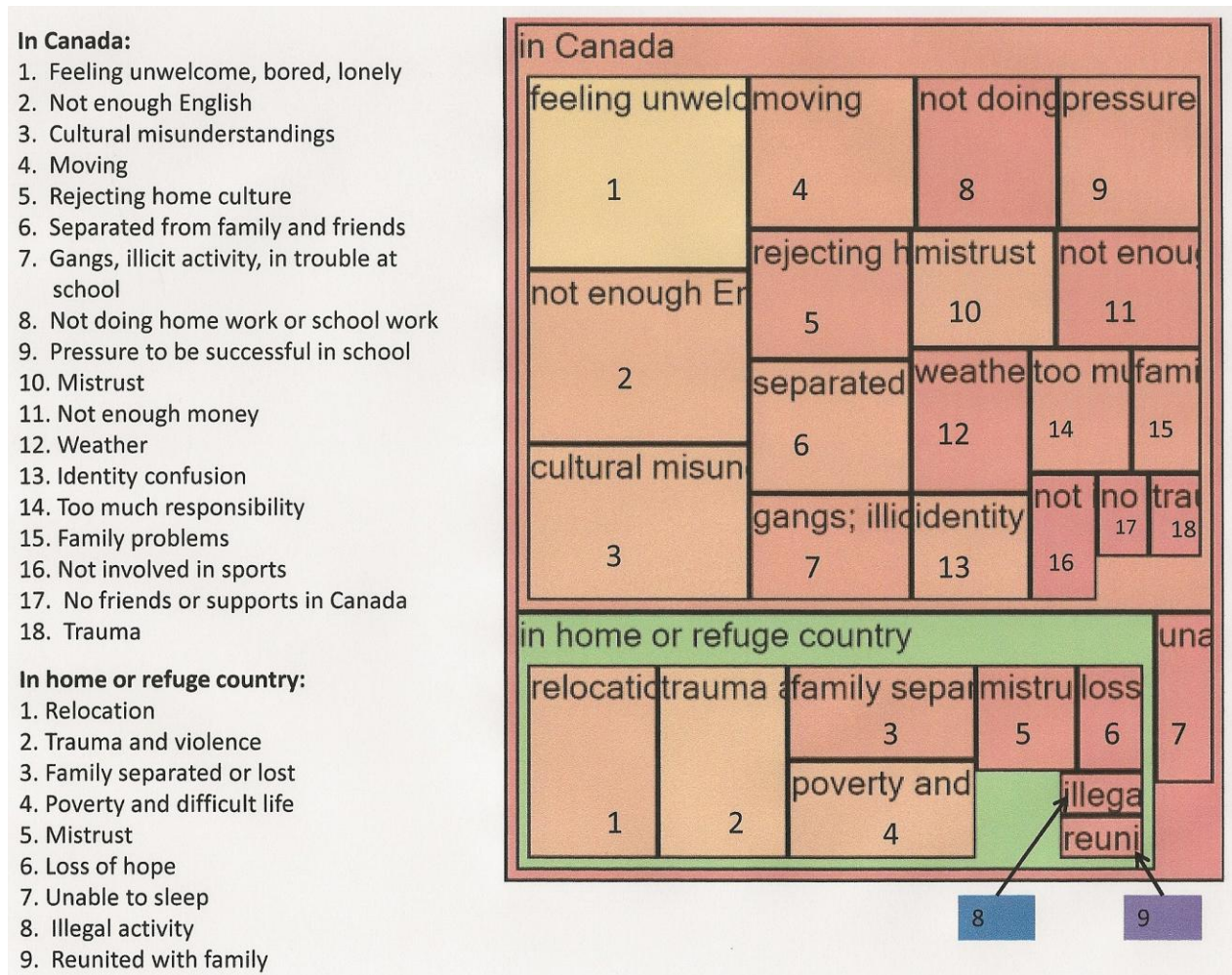


Figure 4. 2. Student-identified factors that contribute to risk.

The interconnection between academic and social risk factors was clearly delineated in the student-generated stories. Students identified the need to have better English skills in order

to find a job. Without gainful employment, families experienced poverty and isolation in a country that promised a better life. As a result of the numerous barriers to material wealth, a sense of alienation arose (Reinhart, 2007), and youth became a perfect target for illicit subcultures that promised social activities, employment, and belonging.

Although many of the participants' examples relating to gangs were inspired by events in other provinces, it must be recognized that Saskatchewan is not immune to the conditions that lure immigrant and refugee youth into illicit activity. In Saskatchewan Adam (2007) reports the death of a young, Somali-born man who was stabbed to death by his Sudanese-born friend during a dinner to celebrate the former's release from prison. Adam paints a picture of young men who lived in refugee camps, dropped out of Canadian high school, worked in low-paying jobs, and became involved in illicit activity.

Adam (2007) and others show the educational and social factors that place youth at risk in Canada. My findings contribute to the existing literature by providing the voices of youth who have directly experienced interrupted education and forced migration. The student-generated narratives challenge public discourse that all students have an equal opportunity to education and dropping out of school is simply a matter of personal choice. Instead, my findings show that limited first language education, undeveloped English skills, restricted time for secondary school studies and students' feelings of being unwelcome and culturally misunderstood put these youths in a tenuous situation for early school leaving and for their involvement in illicit activity. In my work to promote social justice and anti-oppressive education, the students' stories are key because they portray the impact of negative social factors. This is important because in the professional assessment of risk, concern is often "directed toward pathological or dysfunctional characteristics of individuals, and larger structural factors

are minimized or ignored” (Mullaly, 2007, p. 23). The findings of this study also show that the emotionally negative consequences related to forced migration and relocation contribute to youths’ accumulation of risk. Chapter Five will further highlight the emotional stresses that newcomer youth experience in their home countries or countries of refuge which negatively affect the capacity to resettle. This interpretation will be based on the student-generated narratives as well.

Chapter Five

Students' Stories of Emotional Risk

The consideration of emotional risk factors related to relocation is relatively new. Although the impact of migration on mental health was studied prior to World War II (Dalgard, 2010), “socio-political analyses of migration rarely pay adequate attention to the psycho-social after-effects in [the] immigrant [and refugee] population” (Galler & Sher, 2010, p. 88). The youth participants’ stories of emotional challenges related to migration help to fill this gap. In this chapter, I address the emotional toll of the challenging academic and social factors outlined in Chapter Four. The most pertinent issues related to emotional risk factors mentioned by the student participants in this study are: the fear of winter; identity confusion; becoming adults too soon; forced migration, violence, and trauma. By bringing these issues to the foreground, it is my goal to raise public awareness of the impact of the student-identified factors and to acknowledge the need to enhance Canadians’ hospitality to newcomers. This is because “support from others at critical phases of resettlement may either help protect against the emergence of later disorder, or facilitate recovery in cases in which a disorder has already occurred” (Bieser, 1999, p. 113). I believe that it is necessary for Canadians to be cognizant that youths’ past experiences of trauma and the pressures of taking on adult responsibilities prematurely have a direct negative bearing on the development of a strong sense of self and the ability to engage in learning activities (Freeman et al., 2002; Kirmayer, 2002; Pipher, 2001).

5.1 The Fear of Winter

It is not uncommon for Canadians to ask newcomers how they like winter, but it may not be clear how emotionally taxing such drastic climate changes can be. Winter weather generates fear of death, isolation, and a sense of aesthetic deprivation. For some students who arrive in the

splendid weather of a Saskatchewan summer, the onset of winter inspires feelings of homesickness and longing for warmer climes. For students who arrive in the midst of sub-zero temperatures, the conditions seem life threatening. Adjustment to a Canadian prairie winter is much more than just getting the proper boots, overcoats, mittens or gloves and headgear, much of which is unfamiliar to newcomers who come from warmer climates. The following examples from five students show that adjustment to winter required more than merely acclimatizing.

Adnan was pragmatic about the cultural adjustments needed to deal with cold: *“I know there is lot of people they haven’t seen snow before so this people they have to know about what snow is what kind of close u[sic] have [to] wear.”* On the contrary, winter was an affront to Sandman’s artistic sensibilities: *“Everything is just white. And there’s . . . no other colours. That’s not good.”* The changing seasons restricted Marty’s outdoor activities, and his enthusiasm for being in Saskatchewan dwindled with the arrival of winter. He expressed his emotional anxiety through the fictional character, Lucy the duck, who had travelled to a new lake to find a more exciting life. In the story, Lucy lamented: *“When the weather was getting cold . . . it wasn’t as good as before.”*

For Loso and his family, the transition was startling and abrupt as they travelled from Turkey to Canada via Germany at the coldest time of the year: *“In Germany it wasn’t cold, but in Canada it was. In Germany it was just a little bit cold. It was January 27th, 2009. It was cold.”* Coincidentally, Halwa also arrived in January; her written description of the first winter captured the mystery and trepidation experienced by newcomers from the southern hemisphere:

The first time I come to Canada I saw snow. I asked someone what is that? She told me that is snow. I said what kind of snow she said we have in Canada this snow every year. I said ok I went outside and put my hand under the snow it was freezing. Oh my god

what is this? I said. I was scary to go outside in January the woman helping us to know everything in Canada like a how to take bus or how to go shopping. That woman told me you going school. I said what? How come I have to go school when is every where is snow I can't go school until snow go away. She said no we are not wa[i]ting until snow go away you have to go school I said ok but how about if I die in the snow.

Adjusting to the dramatically changing seasons of Saskatchewan is but one of the many emotional challenges faced by immigrant and refugee youth.

The first winter is particularly difficult for youth, and the fear and isolation cannot be underestimated. Usually, as time passes, youth learn to wear appropriate clothing and find indoor activities for the long winter days, but the passing of time increases other psychological trials. The next section describes the ways these youth struggle to find a median between accepting a Canadian way-of- life and maintaining their families' traditional cultural values.

5.2 Identity Confusion

As the son of a visiting scholar, Marty had the opportunity to study in Canada, which brought positive and negative aspects of Iranian and Canadian culture to light:

Dating and relations are some complex things that depend on cultures and religions and maybe other stuff. I think it's not good neither in Iran nor here. In Iran should be less controlled and here should be more controlled. . . . I like Canada's school system, because it's so hard in Iran. I think here should be harder than this. I like Iranian schools because it's more fun.

Pearl's stories illustrated the emotional dissonance experienced by youth as they attempt to find a place in society while staying true to family values. In Pearl's opinion, the multicultural nature of the school encouraged students to abandon cultural priorities or principles in order to

embrace Canadian customs. Pearl's comments demonstrate the conflict felt by youth who feel they must choose between cultures:

When people come to school with other culture people and met them, most people change. You know, in this school . . . this girl is Muslim and she's not wearing scarf. Like she's wearing really short skirt. She's not good. I think her mom is not allowed to do that, but she's doing that. She's not good. If your mom is not feeling good about this, this is not good . . . Mostly people when they came to school and other places, they will find other ways to go. They will do other cultures' dressing, mostly dressing, they'll change dressing. I don't like that.

Finding the balance between cultures presented a challenge for Pearl. It was difficult for Pearl to come to terms with blending cultures and integrating the most positive aspects of her home culture and Canadian customs. Although she chastised others for wearing inappropriate, western-style clothing, Pearl's comfort with traditional clothing had changed:

I can't feel good in those clothes in school or in grocery store and everything. If it's like mosque or Pakistani party or something like that, I feel good to wear those clothes and talk to the people . . . like we talk in Pakistan, but in school and other things, other places, I can't do that. It's not Pakistan, right?

Pearl acknowledged she had changed in aspects other than her outward appearance. At the end of Pearl's first interview, she talked about her upcoming trip to Pakistan to be married. She wondered aloud if her family and friends would think she had changed. Upon her return, we met for a second interview. Although generally quiet in class, Pearl was brimming with stories punctuated by laughter. Her suspicions had been right; her rural family found she had changed, and Pearl realized that she had become a different person physically and socially:

They were looking at me. . . . “You’re totally changed.” Because when I came [to Canada], that time I was younger, I was 15 maybe 16, and my height was not so big . . . “You are changed, totally changed.” “Really, I don’t know.” And everyone was talking me, and I was like “What, why are you looking at me?” Like this is weird. . . . My sister said . . . the way I talk and the way I walk was totally changed. . . . Then I went to village where I was living before coming here, and that was my house . . . I went there and all the kids and my neighbours came to my house. . . . They wanted to see me, and I was like, “Leave me alone!” And everyone came to my house and like they want to meet me, but I was confused . . . Too many people . . . [H]ere there’s not too many people in our house, right? We’re not used to [that]. Everyone is coming and talking . . . I felt so odd . . . and they’re like, “You’re totally Canadian” and I’m like, “No, I’m not.”

Pearl found it necessary to defend herself when a family friend accused her of being rude: *“I felt so bad. What the hell is this? Why are you talking like this? I didn’t react like that. I was confused because it was my very first day.”* Later, Pearl’s identity confusion was exacerbated when she tried to help in the kitchen and found she was unfamiliar with the cooking utensils:

When I’m back to Pakistan . . . I felt like when I was using anything, any single thing, “Oh, how can I use this?” I didn’t know anything. Like you, you can go to Pakistan and me, we both don’t know anything. I was like, “What? I’m from Pakistan. I must know these things.” But no I didn’t know anything. My sister was like, “Oh, so you need help with this.” I was like, “Ya, I need help because I don’t know how to do this.”

Comparing her reception in the city and rural community, Pearl spoke with exasperation, *“In that village, it was so, so, so stupid . . . I was like, ‘I’m not Canadian, I’m Pakistani. You know that. Why are you doing this to me?’”* Trying to make sense of the situation, Pearl

surmised, *“It’s like I’m used to it here, and now I don’t know anything about Pakistan.”* Sighing in frustration, she continued, *“Everyone was questioning . . . ‘You don’t know how to speak Punjabi. You don’t know anything. You don’t know how go outside alone.’ And . . . I felt odd.”* After thirty days in Pakistan, the cultural disparity was too much for Pearl to bear: *“Oh my God, I want to go back home. Tell my mom I want to go back. I can’t live here.”* Another student who experienced angst when returning to his country of origin was Hamid.

Cultural confusions and changing identities were major topics in Hamid’s writing. Hamid’s story about his recent trip to Afghanistan offered an interesting retrospective analysis of his identity. After living in Canada for more than eight years, Afghan cultural practices were a mystery to Hamid. The following excerpts from his story, which contain photos taken from an on-line photo sharing site, showed Hamid’s perception of the confusing, embarrassing, and often frightening events. Upon arrival in Afghanistan, he and his mother took a taxi that was unlike the Canadian transportation to which Hamid had become accustomed:



Figure 5.1. Afghan taxi. Retrieved from

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/stepnout/2971644386/>

At first I started to panic, thinking [the cab driver] might be drunk . . . I saw there was no seat belt in this cab. He pressed on the gas and was honking his horn as he drove through the red light. At first I thought that guy was crazy, but then I realized that all the drivers were driving the same way. Finally he dropped us by the bus stop, and broke the handle of the luggage as he was pulling the luggage from the trunk. Man, I did not want to drive in his car again.

Hamid used the next picture, also found on an internet site for sharing photos, to describe his bus trip to the country donning “new cultural clothing [that] was uncomfortable at first.”



Figure 5.2. Afghanistan. Retrieved from

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/isafmedia/2904646271/>

Hamid explained that although he learned to “*manage*” his clothes, his unfamiliarity with Afghan culture became more apparent at prayer time:

“In our country, when a person is travelling, he would have to make half of what he normally prays. I didn’t know that, so I took a long time. The whole bus was waiting for me and blowing its horn.”

Hamid’s last destination was Helmand province, which he described as “*the place where I was born, but never had the chance to see. I moved from there when I was seven months old.*”

On the way, the vehicle was stopped by the military police who “*asked every male to come out for the search.*” As the officer approached, Hamid’s cultural ineptitude continued to cause him great difficulty:

He asked me in Farsi where I was coming from. Because I was new to the country, I did not know which place to tell him. I also could not tell him that I was coming from Canada, because it would have been more headache from asking too many questions and for passports while the visa was only registered in Pakistan. I told the military person that I came from Kandahar, but for some reason he thought I said Pakistan and all the people in the jeep got mad and told him that I didn't speak Farsi. Otherwise he would have to search the whole jeep and mess around everyone's clothing, which no one would appreciate. He waited a moment and told us to go. When I sat back in the jeep, I saw everybody was angry with me. I felt a little shame.

Pearl and Hamid's descriptions of their identity confusion upon returning to their countries of birth demonstrated the emotional strain experienced by youth who have adapted to Canadian life more than they realized. Furthermore, these youths' identity confusion is exacerbated by the acquisition of many adult responsibilities for the family.

5.3 Becoming Adults Too Soon

When youth are pressured to take on adult roles, often there are negative psychological outcomes. As discussed in the section regarding social risk factors, many immigrant and refugee youth must take on adult roles and responsibilities. The emotional consequences of such situations include worry about finances, caring for parents who do not speak English, feeling overwhelmed and weary by responsibility, and ultimately, losing hope.

A frequently-discussed burden for these youth was the financial cost of relocation. November talked about his family arriving in Canada with the equivalent of a few cents in their pockets. Oscar told the story of his parents' worry that their money would not be sufficient to buy everything for their new home. Adnan and Loso talked about the stress of having to repay

the family's travel loan to the federal government. Using photos of his family, Adnan described how he took on the financial responsibility of the household:

I am able to take care of my mom who has diabetes and my three brothers and sister. I am able to work six days a week which helps me provide for my family here and in other countries. . . . I [work] because the government they need ticket money [the Canadian government's travel loan to refugees] so we have to pay the money to the government.



Figure 5.3. Inside Adnan's home

Halwa wrote about the consequences of working while studying:

I was working 7 to 4 it is hard to work full time when your [sic] student because it is hard to woke up Monday morning to come to school you feel [tired; falling] sleep. [O]n Monday I didn't come to school because I was doing a lot of thing to be done.

Besides caring for herself, Halwa contributed to her sister and brother-in-law's household funds, and offered financial support to newcomers from her country of origin. Halwa's sense of filial responsibility was so strong that she sacrificed her own desires for stability and education:

I called my mother. She told me she is a sick, and my stepfather and my mother they separate. My mom and my sister and brother moved to Toronto. My stepfather is left in Edmonton. . . . Mom has little kids. There are 6 kids. She needs help . . . I decided to go to help my mom when she told me she has this problem.

Another student who felt a great sense of family responsibility was Oscar.

Upon arrival in Canada, Oscar began to carry the financial burden of his family. To illustrate the economic difficulties his family faced, Oscar's goal was to create a photo essay of their home with nothing and add one piece of furniture at a time until the room reached its current state. Since he was working nearly full-time while going to school, the time demands of carrying out such a plan were unrealistic. Instead, Oscar described his situation in writing:

When we come into the apartment, I see there is nothing, only one bed, no TV, no table no chair, and buy at night. We went to Superstore and just saw everything, and just saw the money, just take one hundred money because just scared not enough money to pay.

The sense of being scared by financial worries was also talked about by 21-year –old Sandman who attended school, worked, and acted as the liaison between his parents and government officials as they established a small business.

Sandman explained how overwhelming accountability and stress take an enormous emotional toll on youth: *“Right now, I feel like I’m responsible for everything, and I feel I’m pretty much old. I don’t feel young like six or seven months ago. I feel like I’m an old man, and I can’t do much. I feel like I’m forty-five, fifty something.”* Such emotional and physical stress

was shown by the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma to be detrimental to a person's health and increased risks of chronic health problems such as hypertension, cancer, asthma and depression (BRYCS, 2005). The physical and emotional toll of youth taking on adult responsibilities is intensified by the impact of traumatic events some young people have heard about, witnessed, or experienced.

5.4 Forced Migration, Violence, and Trauma

People who have experienced forced migration have a high probability of experiencing violence (White, 2007). These events contribute to aspects of risk after resettlement whether the traumatic experience is on a personal level (experiencing the event), a secondary level (seeing a traumatic event), or tertiary (hearing about the event) because the effects of unresolved grief are enduring and even intergenerational (Robben, 2000). This holds true for the students in this study who described fear of impending death, flashbacks, the inability to sleep, as well as loss of trust and hope. Adult allies are also affected by the overwhelming responsibility of hearing traumatic stories. Pre-migration violence and trauma have enduring effects that continue to put youth at risk after resettlement in a new country (Hrubes, 2000; Kristal-Andersson, 2001; Pipher, 2002).

Like 20 million children who become refugees or displaced persons (Machel, 2001), YG and Halwa were forced from their homes by warfare and violence. Both youth wrote about undergoing traumatic events caused by assaults on their communities. YG wrote about his birth after his family's escape to the forests of Burma. The story of his difficult life in a Thai refugee camp arose again in his children's story for grade eleven English Language Arts (ELA 20). Using an internet photo of a thatched-roofed, bamboo house on stilts completely surrounded by dense jungle, YG began writing his children's story in the third person: "*A few years ago, a boy*

had a big house. He didn't have to pay the rent. He lived there for free but something very hard to live there." Switching to the first person and using another internet photo of shoeless children playing around a fallen tree on a barren, dirt compound, YG continued:

Sometimes I was feeling despair when I live in the refugee camp because no money, no job or my family had to work hard and my parents had to find the food for us and had to plan to day to another day. We lived in the camp so it was very difficult to grow the vegetables sometimes. Everything and anyone had a small space to live.

YG's situation is made clearer in a paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report. Oh (2010) portrays the Karen Burmese residents of Thai refugee camps as a community determined to provide children an education as they utilize the experience of teachers hired from within the camp. Despite their positive intentions, the progress of the Karen refugees is encumbered by few resources and numerous government policies that limit opportunities:

By law, the refugees are not allowed to obtain employment in Thailand outside the camps. They do, however, find employment illegally . . . more than half of the sample reported earning nothing and less than a fifth earned between US\$0.03 and US\$3 a month. (p. 8)

Oh's (2010) article fills in the gaps of YG's story. She provides examples of refugees finding day labour, which could be what YG refers to when he wrote that his parents had to find food from day to day. Oh (2010) also explains that the Thai government will not allow the use of books that contain political ideas, attitudes or values; the expansion of school buildings is not allowed, so the bamboo-partitioned classrooms are noisy, crowded and hot.

Conditions of deprivation were included in Halwa's portrayal of life in a Kenyan refugee camp. In a presentation of her life history for a grade ten Computer Processing class (CP 10),

Halwa did not go into great detail but frequently used the phrase “*difficult life*.” First she wrote about the relocation of Somalis to Kenya: “*Sometimes life was difficult because if you come to a new country and you don’t have good food or house then life will be difficult.*” In slightly more detail, Halwa described the move to a refugee camp:

My mother was a business woman. She sold clothes. After one year she didn’t have the business. Then we moved to refugee camp. Really life was difficult there. . . . The first time I went there I thought maybe I will die.

An internet search for the Kakuma refugee camp in which Halwa lived helped to elucidate the plight of this young woman’s family. The *Kakuma News Reflector – A Refugee Free Press* provides a description of camp conditions:

The camp population stands at just under 50,000 refugees (Population section, ¶ 1). In addition to problems such as poisonous insects and snakes, the daily temperature is 40 degrees Celsius, and there are outbreaks of malaria and cholera (Environment section, ¶ 1).

This article mirrors much of what Halwa described and provides details of the difficult life of which she wrote. Many years in overcrowded camps with limited opportunities creates psychosocial problems that persist into post-migration settlement (Pressé & Thomson, 2007). Traumatic experiences of all types distort the development of values, suppress higher-order thinking about human relations, and stimulate more primitive approaches (Garbarino & Kostelney, 1996).

Being a prolific storyteller, Adnan provided numerous examples that illustrate Garbarino and Kostelney’s (1996) analysis. Adnan spoke of the great hardships while living in Saudi Arabia and Turkey: his mother begging, so she could feed her children; his fear of the Saudi

police arresting and deporting his family; and the violence he experienced at the hands of his teachers:

When I was in back home sometimes I used to feel bad when I used to go school the teacher he used to hit us. I used to get beat up for the teacher. . . . Teachers, if you make a little mistake, you know what they did to me? I don't like math, seriously I don't like math, and the teacher, he throw a book at me, and I cry. He told me to shut up, and I told him, [it] still hurt. . . . The teacher said like something bad about my mom, and I get mad. I just say it back to him. He say, "I'm gonna take you to the principal." I say, "I gonna go first because you swear at my mom. You don't have to do that."

Witnessing events can have equally negative emotional consequences.

Loso, Adnan's brother, showed that he was a storyteller in his own right when he recounted horrific stories of public execution. On the first occasion, I was listening to him read *The Heaven Shop* by Deborah Ellis. Loso stopped reading and told a detailed story about women being stoned to death. The second event happened several days later when we read in the novel that the coffin maker sweeps wood chips to the edge of his yard, so poor people can retrieve them for firewood. Loso asked what chips were. I told him, and he started to tell his story by saying his family had to search for bits of wood for heat and cooking in Turkey. He said that they could not do that in Saudi Arabia because if the police caught them, they would be executed. Loso told the story of a public execution in great detail: people holding the person down, head rolling, feet kicking; he talked about parents taking children to watch in order to teach them a lesson.

It is unclear if Loso actually saw a public execution or instead heard about it. Perhaps his experience is the result of intergenerational trauma created by parents passing down horrific

stories to their children (Green, 2007). His account does, however, correspond to the first-hand experience of Somali-born author Hirsi Ali (2007):

As soon as we left the mosque, Saudi Arabia meant intense heat and filth and cruelty. People had their heads cut off in public squares. Adults spoke of it. It was a normal, routine thing: after the Friday noon prayer you could go home for lunch, or you could go and watch the executions. Hands were cut off. Men were flogged. Women were stoned. (p. 43)

Whether Loso's story was learned from others or a re-living of a horrible experience, the images continued to haunt him after he left Saudi Arabia.

Witnessing atrocities was not limited to refugees. Immigrants who lived in countries of political unrest were bystanders in times of violence and conflict. Sandman's story illustrated the great impact of observing brutality. As a young man of twenty, Sandman saw the death of his peers in the student protests in Iran. Able to escape with a visitor's visa, Sandman entered secondary school in Saskatchewan where, in an attempt to make sense of the experience, he wrote an essay entitled *Immortal Soldier*:

It was last fall that four men died in front of me, and I saw and smelled their blood. That day 15 men and women died, and a few days later they killed one of my friends too. In the winter they arrested my brother and kept him half a night in jail. I can still see all of those scenes, and in spite of the fact that I run out of my homeland.

Few Canadians are trained to deal with such direct distress and few can fully empathise with the long term effects of being a witness to such tragedy. In addition to experiencing and witnessing shocking events of such emotional intensity that cause emotional distress, hearing traumatic stories can add to the accumulation of risk by creating tertiary trauma.

The effects of tertiary trauma are well documented in countries with a long history of violence. It is possible for trauma to be transferred to others who hear the accounts and are witness to the effects of traumatic events. In Israel for example, Brom (as cited in Beck, 2007) posited that the children of victims of trauma become second generation trauma survivors. Such was the case of three student participants who had personal or family connections to Somalia, Iran, and Afghanistan. Adnan, Sandman, and Hamid shared traumatic stories they assimilated from their parents. First, Adnan talked about the flight of refugees from Turkey. He recounted: *“You know, in Turkish, Greek, there’s a little ocean. 40, 45 minute. I know a lot people died there.”* I asked him if the people went in a boat, and he answered, *“Yeah a little boat. . . . Twenty people in that boat. I know a lot of people die.”*

During his interview, Sandman explained how his father’s stories of torture had affected the family:

My dad, when he was studying in the university, he was caught and he was in jail for one year for political reasons. . . . He was tortured for that year, and it wasn’t, I guess, it wasn’t really good. I wasn’t there at that time. I wasn’t existing. . . . He was 23 or 22 something I guess. I’m not sure because he never talk[ed] about that for a long time. Just here or there, I’ve heard something, and recently because of immigration, we have to know about it. But he was tortured. He always talked to me about the torture part. And the problem is, because of the torture part, he’s always, always angry and sometimes aggressive, and I can’t say I don’t blame him for being aggressive. I sometimes do.

While Sandman recently learned about his father’s horrific experiences, Hamid had been raised with stories of very tragic circumstances.

In an essay for grade twelve English (ELA 30) Hamid wrote about the stories of traumatic events that his family has passed down since he was a child. The history of Afghanistan, the country of his birth, was mixed with the memories of his childhood to create the narrative of his life:

In 1979, the Afghan government was corrupted by new laws and the invasion of Russia. This brought nothing but corruption to both countries. In 1989, when the Soviets left Afghanistan, a new set of government was formed when Mujahedeens, which means “Holy warriors”, took over the Afghani government and brought harsh side of Islam among people. The same year, my dad was in the army and went through many horrible tasks. By 1991, when my grandma died, there was nothing left for us so [my father] decided to send us to Russia. He only stayed with us for three years. Then I saw the last of him. The image of his face is still in my memories.

The horrific stories such as these that young people hear from their family members have a negative and lasting effect. When youths such as the student-participants of this project relay stories of violence and persecution to caring teachers, the negative impact of traumatic events is often passed on to the empathetic hearers.

Miss O. S.’s statement shows the emotional impact the students’ stories had on her:

There are times when I go home wishing they didn’t tell me things. You know, just because it’s in my mind; it’s in my head, and I’m thinking how can I do this? How can I do that? Or I just get so anxious and worried about the student.

Miss O.S.’s response is not uncommon. When people in helping professions control their empathetic response to hearing stories of trauma, the result can be vicarious trauma or second-hand shock (Izzo & Carpel Miller, 2011). Caregivers’ symptoms are similar to those of the

person who experienced the initial trauma. Symptoms might include: increased negative arousal; intrusive thoughts; lowered frustration tolerance; depression; self-destructive behaviours; diminished sense of purpose; loss of hope (Ambrose, 2005).

The traumatic events experienced or witnessed in their home countries as well as the traumatic stories these youth heard, continued to affect them even when they were safely settled in Canada. Herman (1992) wrote that “traumatic events produce profound and lasting changes in physiological arousal, emotion, cognition and memory” (p. 34). Although cultural interpretations, personal attributes, and social supports determined how each person responded to trauma (Kirmayer & Young, 1998; Kristal-Andersson, 2001; Seligman, 1995), the commonly recorded responses to traumatic events were hyperarousal, intrusive thoughts, and numbing (Luhrman, 2000).

Three of the students showed indications of trauma such as hyperarousal and repetitive, intrusive thoughts that negatively influenced their ability to sleep (Herman, 1992). Loso was kept awake by the memories of the public executions in Saudi Arabia. Overwhelmed with worry, Adnan found that he could not sleep at night. For Sandman, thoughts of his friends in Iran remained ever present: *“I think about them every night and day. I never stop thinking about them, but there’s nothing I can do, and that’s sometimes hard.”* He articulated the effects of such thoughts:

Sleep is a really big issue for me. I usually have sleep disorder or something. I sometimes feel I’m being tortured when I sleep. Then I wake up. Or sometimes I don’t wake up, and that’s worse, and when I wake up I don’t want to just go back to sleep.

Besides the inability to sleep, certain conditions were intensified or aggravated by the continual reminders of the traumatic events found on the internet. During a class discussion, YG

shared his situation with Miss O. S.. YG's older brother-in-law called YG crazy for telling stories about his people in Burma. The young man's family told him to forget and just have a "good new life." YG said, "*I don't forget*" and told his brother-in-law that he could not forget the people of Burma because "*they are [his] blood.*" YG said that he looked at the website of his country and cried. He told Miss O. S. That a man had walked around the world to tell people what was happening in Burma, but he was killed.

YG was also disturbed by internet photos of dead people in his country. When other students used the internet to search for the English translation of their names, YG followed their lead. He commented to Miss O.S. that when he searched for his name, all he could find was pictures of dead men. The internet has both positive and negative effects for refugees and immigrants (White, 2009). For example, the internet was helpful for YG to find photos of his refugee camp and help explain Burmese culture to his teacher and me, but it also caused him stress when he stumbled upon photos that renewed his traumatic experiences. To establish the extent to which YG and his classmates were negatively affected by trauma is complex.

Trauma is very difficult to quantify because of the cultural understanding of events, the continued functioning of people, and delayed onset of symptoms. Investigations may show low numbers of people suffering from post-traumatic stress among newcomers if the studies are done in the first few years after arrival; the challenges to mental health might appear years later (Beiser, 1999). The effects of trauma on children are particularly difficult to assess. Beiser, Armstrong, Ogilvie, Osman-Martinez, and Rummens (2005) report rates of post-traumatic stress as high as 50% in refugee youth, yet they ponder why the rates are not 100% "assuming that all refugee children have been exposed to horror" (p. 23). Swedish researchers conclude that the conditions under which refugees leave their home country create a high probability of post-

migration mental health issues (Hollander, Bruce, Burström, & Ekbal, 2011). However, survivors often go untreated “because post-traumatic symptoms are so persistent and so wide-ranging, they may be mistaken for enduring characteristics of the victim’s personality” (Herman, 1992, p. 49).

The absence of apparent signs of trauma does not guarantee the absence of trauma; as Beiser (1999) explains, suppression of the past may be a good coping skill but “those who suppress eventually remember” (p. 140). From outward appearances, YG seemed like a happy-go-lucky fellow without a care in the world, but his conversations with his teachers showed that he was overwhelmed with grief, impending doom, and loss of hope. Although he could not share his emotions with his family, he found an outlet for his feelings in school writing assignments and group discussions. For example, in a previous EAL class where the phrase “I care about” was being taught, YG asked if he could write “I don’t care” and afterwards wrote, “*I don’t care about dying.*” On another occasion, YG talked about being a teacher and going back to Burma. He said, “*Maybe I’ll die soon.*” Then he changed the subject.

Violence and persecution also affect the capacity of youth to interact with others because an additional consequence of experiencing, witnessing or hearing such traumatic stories is the loss of trust. Pipher (2002) surmises that trust is the first casualty of trauma. For refugees, mistrust and isolation have been important survival strategies in times of organized violence, and therefore they are difficult behaviours to change (Nadeau & Measham, 2006). The most basic social interactions between parents and children can be affected because children can lose their sense of trust during times of vulnerability and fear (Levine & Kline, 2006). Children rely on adults for protection; when adults do not or cannot provide a sense of safety, children become

distrustful and overly self-reliant (Watson, 2003). Two examples of loss of trust were given by Adnan and Sandman.

Adnan showed his loss of trust for teachers and family members. Without trust, he developed strategies for manipulation to avoid punishment from teachers. He also lost trust in family members living abroad when they promised financial help that never materialized, leaving the family struggling to survive: “[My uncle] said, ‘I’m going to send you guys one hundred dollar.’ Never did. Lie. Never, never ever did. My mom told him, ‘Look, we’re not asking for millions. Just one hundred dollar for food and stuff like that.’” As Adnan’s narrative demonstrates, mistrust becomes a survival strategy for people who experienced political repression and violence (Straker, 1996), and family rupture. Sandman also expressed feelings of mistrust because of the on-going political situation in his country of origin.

Sandman openly displayed his loss of trust for his fellow Iranians by writing, “*People are either friendly or aggressive . . . but you must always watch your back.*” He went on to explain that as a result of such societal insecurities, youth in Iran became suspicious of their parents:

When you can’t trust your father that means you cannot trust anyone . . . The next place would be friends. If you don’t have good friends, you don’t have anything. You can’t trust anyone. And that’s something that’s changing in my country. People don’t trust their parents, their family anymore.

The feelings of uncertainty do not disappear once the students are resettled in Canada but remain long after the danger has passed (Hrubes, 2000). Mistrust and insecurity create barriers to developing healthy relationships (Nadeau & Measham, 2006), which was articulated forthrightly by Sandman:

Like right now, I can't trust lots of people when I meet them. I don't like that, and I try to trust them . . . and I want to trust them. . . . So here when I want to trust someone, and really don't want to have that feeling any more, I just give them space to stab me in my back. So if they do that, I don't trust that person. I don't get angry. I really don't get angry. I expect people to betray me, so if they don't do that, it gives me a really good feeling. . . . I still have trust issues. Last week I wanted to go to a club with a friend, a new friend, and I just didn't. It's just too much for me. I don't trust that person right now, but I will give it a try in one or two weeks. I'll see what happens.

I observed this guardedness and social distancing in Tim Tom who arrived as an immigrant and never spoke of traumatic situations, so it is unclear why he was so distrusting.

Three specific situations demonstrated Tim Tom's lack of trust. Often Tim Tom separated himself physically from the class. While the other students, the classroom teacher and I sat in a circle, Tim Tom sat just outside the circle. He usually appeared to be unengaged until he would make a comment or eagerly state that it was his turn to tell a story. Occasionally he joined the circle on his own accord, and Miss O.S. respectfully acknowledged his choices. The second situation was Tim Tom's polite avoidance of a personal interview with me. He began by delaying our appointment and later making excuses, which led me to assume that he did not feel comfortable, so I discontinued my invitations. The final example of Tim Tom's guardedness was brought to my attention when he submitted his writing folder for my research purposes. At the top of his reflective essay was written, "*Attention!! This is not a true story.*" Interestingly, his reflections were mature, insightful, and well written. Tim Tom showed great personal growth, yet he remained very unsure about displaying his thoughts. As with the lack of trust

shown by immigrant and refugee youth, participants who arrived in Canada under difficult circumstances demonstrated an impending sense of doom and loss of hope for the future.

Moving beyond the pain of the past and planning for the future is often a very difficult concept for youth who have experienced persecution and forced migration. People who have suffered trauma assume they will come to an early demise (Barnard et al., 1999; Deng, 2006; Herman, 1992). As well, people who cannot think about the future become nostalgic and focus on the past (Beiser, 1999). This is very evident in YG's writing, as he frequently described past difficulties and seldom mentioned a positive future.

Young people who have not endured traumatic experiences can also have difficulty planning for the future. Although Oscar arrived as an immigrant and did not report being exposed to traumatic events, he did display the loss of hope. This was because the accumulation of stress reduced his ability to be hopeful (Dudley-Grant & Etheridge, 2008) and therefore, increased his chance of succumbing to depression and early school leaving (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1996; Garrod et al., 2002). One day after school, Oscar talked to Miss O.S.; she asked Oscar if she could share their conversation with me, and he agreed. Miss O. S. Provided this account:

Oscar said he was so bored when he first arrived. He went to school, went home and played on the computer. He said, "I kept thinking, my life is gone." His mother told him they had to start over. Oscar said he wants a "nice" job but his English is not good. He said, "Maybe my son will have a good job." He recalled that people in China think that he must have a good life, but Oscar said, "My life is gone."

At the age of twenty, Oscar had given up his hopes and dreams for a better life, and similar to adult immigrants, he placed his faith in future generations. The need to share his feelings was

great, and so Oscar's teacher became a surrogate counsellor. This is one way in which these youth cope in Canada.

Teachers searching for appropriate counselling for students will find that immigrants and refugees do not utilize formal mental health services (Norris & Alegría, 2008) and that the mental health system in Saskatchewan has not evolved to meet the needs of the emerging multicultural population (White, 2007). As a result, young people develop many strategies to cope with the enduring effects of traumatic events and the loss of trust and hope. For older youth, dropping out of school provides an initial sensation of energy and empowerment; however, with the realization that few options exist, feelings change to a sense of hopelessness and despair (McLean Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995).

Clinical psychologist Yuval Moshkovitz (as cited in Kuropatwa, 2007), explains that people who have experienced war often keep busy as a way to cope with stress. The stories of two student participants illustrate this outcome. First Oscar, dropped out of school to work full-time only a few months after his conversation with Miss O. S.. Second was Sandman who explained: *"I just try to work harder to just forget it. I can't forget it. Truly, I don't want to forget it, but it's just like, cover it sometimes."* The students' narratives illustrate that whether they lose hope because of traumatic events prior to migration or overwhelming post-migration responsibility, the coping strategies young people create can be counterproductive to their wellbeing. The difficult situations that they experienced have the potential to evoke recurring waves of symptoms over a long period of time (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). Above all, the stories help to dispel "the naive assumption" (Stien & Kendall, 2004) that children are immune to post-traumatic stress.

Miss O. S. Provided recommendations for teachers, school administrators, and Canadians in general regarding the importance of recognizing the needs of youth who have experienced forced migration:

They can't just leave things behind. I think of our conversation with one of the administrators when I was concerned about this particular group of students, and the comment was, "Well things are better for them here than they were back home, aren't they? They're safe." [M]aybe that's the perspective we have. Now they have four walls, but the walls are all leaking, and there are eight of them in there, so [we need] to remind ourselves that they have a lot of the same problems. The issues come with them. The poverty's not going to change over night. The trauma's not going to go away over night. The family dynamics might not be functional. That's not going to go away over night. In fact, some of these things might even be amplified now that they're in a new place where they don't know the language extremely well; they don't know the culture extremely well, so it's not like they can just turn it around and everything's fine. To know that and to have some understanding of that is incredibly important as teachers, much less as human beings.

The issue of teachers learning more about the experiences of youth new to Canada arose in the student participants' narratives as well.

Both student and teacher participants provided suggestions regarding what teachers need to know when working with youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees. Sandman gave this advice:

I think that the teachers should understand that in every country there are different problems and different situations . . . it's just some how important that the teacher

understands that. . . . Imagine that I'm coming from my country, and I have lots of problems in my country, but the teacher only cares about mortgage payments and stuff like that. . . . What I think is that all teachers must know about the world, the problems, what's going on in the world and everything because they are teachers, and they are building the community.

Mr. Jack offered the following words of wisdom for teachers:

Don't pity kids who are EAL students. . . . They need you to give them a hand up, not a hand out. They don't want that. They want you to accept them for who they are. Be interested in their stories. . . . You don't have to know tons about world events or what's happening in their countries. They'll tell you what's happening. And their stories sort of unfold. . . . Be interested in where they've been and where they're going as well.

Similarly, Miss O. S. Said:

I don't want to seem like I want pity for the student, or . . . just let him do whatever he wants [because] this and this happened. I never want that, but I think it's important to understand where they're from . . . in terms of what they walk into our classrooms with every day. If the teachers can see that, they might see the student differently.

The wisdom and insight of the student and teacher participants contribute to a better understanding of the emotional risk factors experienced by youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees. While the educational and social issues that contribute to the accumulation of risk are more obvious and easy to quantify, emotional risk factors are equally relevant. The students in this study clearly articulate the numerous emotional stresses and responsibilities that act as barriers to the successful integration of newcomer youth into Canadian society.

5.5 Discussion

Pre- and post-migration challenges take a heavy emotional toll on newcomer youth. The strategies they develop due to violence, persecution, and the struggle to survive are not easily set aside once they are resettled. The stress and challenges that they face after resettlement create many barriers to emotional wellbeing. Caught between home and school cultures, these young people grapple with a sense of identity. This is complicated by a great need for peer acceptance coupled with feelings of being unwelcome and misunderstood. As they take on adult responsibilities, parents' authority is usurped, thus creating conflicting messages of who has the right to make decisions in the family. The stress of taking on adult roles weighs heavily on these youth and prevents opportunities to participate in peer activities that could mitigate resettlement challenges. This is made worse by feelings of loneliness and boredom, which leave them vulnerable to be drawn into groups involved in illicit activity.

After hearing the students' descriptions, it became clear why youth who experienced war and violence often have difficulty concentrating in school (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1996), and why students struggling with adjustment are mistakenly diagnosed with learning disabilities (Collier, 2001; Freeman et al., 2002; Klinger, 2010; Levine & Kline, 2006). It is also obvious why the Canadian Paediatric Society (1999) calls for educational programs that take into account the detrimental effects of trauma on the capacity of youth to learn.

Newcomer youth arrive in Canada with dreams of a better future for themselves and their families, but it is only a matter of time before the reality of the numerous barriers and challenges to success become clear (Freeman et al., 2002). Newcomers believe that their hard work along with the freedoms and educational opportunities offered in Canada will result in myriad prospects for achievement. What soon becomes apparent to newcomers and their allies is that

educational, social, and emotional risk factors amassed through pre- and post-migration challenges create numerous obstacles to the fulfillment of dreams. Canadians, who are uninformed regarding the plight of those who have experienced forced migration, may perceive newcomer youth as ungrateful, unmotivated, and uncooperative, when in fact, these young people are succumbing to the accumulation of pre- and post-migration risk.

Student-participants identified factors such as violence, relocation, and loss of family members prior to arrival in Canada which resulted in experiencing a long-lasting sense of fear, despair, and loss of trust. Moreover, the youth who experienced extreme poverty and segregation in their country of origin or refuge rejected that culture. This led to the development of an increased level of guardedness against discrimination in Canada, which hindered the creation of friendships or strong ties outside their ethnic group.

Destitution and the paucity of societal supports prior to immigration engendered survival strategies, some of which placed these youth at a high level of risk for being drawn into illicit activity. Despite an understanding of moral codes, the youths who saw themselves as *the other* were able to justify illicit activity directed at wealthy and racist individuals. This continued to affect these youth even after settling in Canada when experiences of poverty and alienation left them feeling rejected and unconnected to society.

For all youth in this study, relocation to a new country was an unsettling event. For those who had experienced relocation due to fear for their safety, the experience had additional consequences. These youth became particularly vulnerable when war or political unrest destroyed social and familiar supports. Emotionally, they suffered because of their own fear of death, their parents' psychological instability and fragility, and the feelings of mistrust among family members.

From the narratives presented in this chapter, four consequences of relocation emerge. Newcomer youth took on adult responsibilities, which reduced the parents' authority and created overwhelming stress for students. These youth remained uncertain about resources and programs, and those who were referred for counselling usually declined appointments. Because of cultural misunderstandings, parents perceived counselling as an unfavourable mark on a student's record. These emotional factors added to the educational challenges of students who arrived with interrupted or restricted first-language education.

For children relocated to refugee camps or countries of asylum, education as idealized in the western world is unknown. Without the school capital to cope in regular educational programs in Canada where assessment continues to be based on Euro-centric, middle-class skills, values, and knowledge, such youth are at risk for academic failure. In addition, institutional discrimination produces unequal outcomes for cultural minority youth when "children in dominant groups receive a larger proportion of public education resources" and when "children who are poor, non-white, and from particular neighbourhoods are more likely to be regarded as emotionally disturbed or mentally challenged" (Mullaly, 2007, p. 273). In Saskatchewan, specific educational programming for youth who have experienced interrupted or restricted education is only beginning to be developed, so these youth are currently placed in pilot programs that do not meet their high educational needs. Adult allies working toward anti-oppressive schools and communities focus on eliminating negative factors and promote positive social environments.

Although Canadians are unable to change the experiences of immigrant and refugee youth prior to coming to Canada, Canadians can influence newcomers' settlement experiences in this country (Beiser, 1999). Positive post-migration experiences are critical to the successful

integration of youth new to Canada because, as Garbarino and Kostelny (1996) postulate, most children can cope with some stress, but stress accumulates exponentially and increases the child's chance of succumbing to early school leaving, despondency, or engagement in risky behaviour.

The stress caused by numerous post-migration risk factors could be mitigated. Social supports such as affordable housing and bridging programs to employment can offer stability to youth and their families, and thus reduce the need for secondary migration. Further research is required to explore alternative pathways for secondary school completion including extended time in high school or credit programs for literacy learners. Research and evaluations are also needed to explore the effectiveness of in-school supports to help youth cope with pre-migration trauma and the emotional challenges of living in a new culture. Pre-service programs and on-going training seminars for teachers are needed to inform educators of the challenges faced by newcomer youth.

While addressing the factors that contribute to the accumulation of risk, it is most important for teachers, government officials, and support service personnel to shift to a new paradigm that also acknowledges newcomers' strengths, resilience, and capacity to adapt to challenging situations (Feldmann et al., 2007). Only when people in such positions of power come to understand that oppression is a social construction can they "embark on a deconstruction of oppressive practices and a reconstruction of society characterized by true social equality" (Mullaly, 2007, p. 284). With this change in perception, settlement countries can create a milieu of resilience. Facilitating protective factors such as language acquisition, peer support systems, and strong family bonds can "boost the psychological resilience of immigrant adolescents, enabling . . . teens to successfully cope in response to significant risk exposure" (Galler & Sher, 2010). This research, therefore, calls for a two-fold objective: to encourage Canadians to value

the skills and knowledge of refugee and immigrant youth, and to draw attention to the need and benefits of enhancing the post-migration supports for at-risk youth. Adopting a youth perspective on refugee and immigrants' strengths and needs reduces an *adultcentric* approach (Ungar, 2001) and the "dominant white racial view of the world" (Bell, 2010). The following two chapters present youths' narratives of academic, family and social supports, as well as their strategies and attributes for growing up well.

Chapter Six

Students' Narratives of Academic, Family, and Social Supports

In order to have a balanced perspective of the needs of youth new to Canada, this study includes a discussion of the academic, family, and social supports that contribute to youths' wellbeing. The goal is to recognize that adolescents who arrive as immigrants and refugees "possess the capacity to cope with and prosper amid the multitude of changes and hardships presented by the immigration experience, whilst simultaneously struggling with age-related development" (Berger, 2008, p. 103). Frequently, this capacity to prosper is referred to as resilience. "Resilience refers to a class of phenomena characterized by *good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development*" [Masten's italics] (Masten, 2001, p. 228). To avoid perceiving these youth through a set of unrealistic expectations, however, I acknowledge that "children are no more and no less resilient than adults" (Capewell, 1999, p. 31) and children are not invincible to continual risks (Boothby et al., 2004; Garbarino, 2008; McAdam-Crisp, 2006). By taking a social constructionist stance, I seek to overcome the hegemonic practice of using a white, middle-class, western perspective to evaluate the lived experiences of culturally-diverse youth (Rogoff, 2003; Ungar, 2001) and recognize that the dimensions of resilience are both culturally and context specific (Theron et al, 2011). It is cogent, therefore, to understand from the perspective of youth who arrive as refugees and immigrants what supports, strategies, and personal attributes buffer risk and foster resilience.

My reason for grouping or categorizing the factors requires explanation. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development is very applicable to discussions around building attachment and trust. Bronfenbrenner uses the metaphor of stackable Russian dolls to symbolize how children first become attached to a primary caregiver and then build

attachments in widening circles, farther away from home, with people less connected to the family. Cole and Cole (1996) create an interesting variation to this theory by demonstrating that children's close primary attachments are established in a series of connected circles. For the purposes of my work with newcomer youth, I see great merit in both systems. In the findings that follow, I show the great importance of attachment to a primary or surrogate caregiver and the challenges created when the attachment is breeched or undeveloped. Through the student participants' stories, I also show how the school environment can become a new place for the building of close relationships, trust and attachment as Cole and Cole describe. It has long been my goal to help youth build a sense of safety and trust in my classroom, to branch out to other EAL students, then to the larger school population, and ultimately to the community. It is because of the literature reviewed and my own personal experiences, that I have grouped the participants' narrative of support into themes of academic, family, and social sources.

The stories and insights from youth participants who originated from eight countries and arrived in Canada with very diverse academic, social, and migration experiences provide a unique opportunity to understand their background from their perspective which can contribute to the development of future support systems. Theron et al. (2011) posit:

Studies sensitive to culture and context will increase understanding that conventions, values, and practices of different cultural groups may overlap. Appreciation of . . . the heterogeneity of conventions and the commonalities in practices can improve a community's capacity to foster youth resilience. (p. 801)

The power of hearing the personal narratives of youth new to Canada is highlighted in an interview with an experienced, English as an additional language (EAL) teacher.

Miss O. S. philosophized about the impact of Canadian-born people understanding the stories of youth who arrive as refugees and immigrants:

I think it would be incredibly powerful for students and incredibly powerful for other teachers to hear these stories because it would give them better insight into the person they're working with opposed to just the name or just this body sitting in the room.

Providing opportunities to develop a better understanding of youth often relegated to the margins of society will be illustrated in the following chapters.

To help organize the students' narratives in regards to developing resilience, this chapter will focus on the students' stories of academic, family, and social supports. The protective factors explicitly identified by the student participants are: academic supports including attachment to school and the recognition of teacher allies; family and social supports include family assistance with resettlement, family connections with the past, attachment to siblings and primary caregivers, and positive peer relationships. The larger themes under which these supports are subsumed are presented in a computer-generated visual representation.

Figure 6.1 is a graphic produced with NVivo 9 software to represent the themes of the student participants' narratives related to the factors that support resilience. The size of the rectangles correspond to the frequency of responses; the larger the rectangle, the more frequently students spoke of this topic. For example, education was spoken of more often than nature, and friends were spoken of the most. I have added the numbers to each box and the list of themes for ease of understanding. Because of these changes, the graphic is not ideal, but I have included it because I believe it is a powerful representation of the most positive factors identified by students.

While organizing and categorizing the students' statements, I had a sense of the frequency of which students spoke and wrote about the importance of friends and family, but it was not until I saw this graphic that I realized how ubiquitous the topics were. This led me to conclude that frequency of discussion was directly related to the importance of the topic, and I began to comprehend how truly significant friends and family are to the student participants' capacity to be resilient. Other factors were less clear.

The students' capacity to maintain a positive attitude was not always spoken of directly, so it was my judgement of what demonstrated a positive nature. Other personal qualities such as having a sense of humour, being independent and showing empathy were also displayed rather than identified by the students. In making the decisions to categorize students' statements, I recognize "inquiry as a social process in which we construct reality as we go along and as a social process in which we . . . construct our criteria for judging inquiries as we go along" (Smith & Deemer, 2000, p. 886). I have taken Schwandt's (2007) advice to not allow uncertainty to prevent me from making judgements.

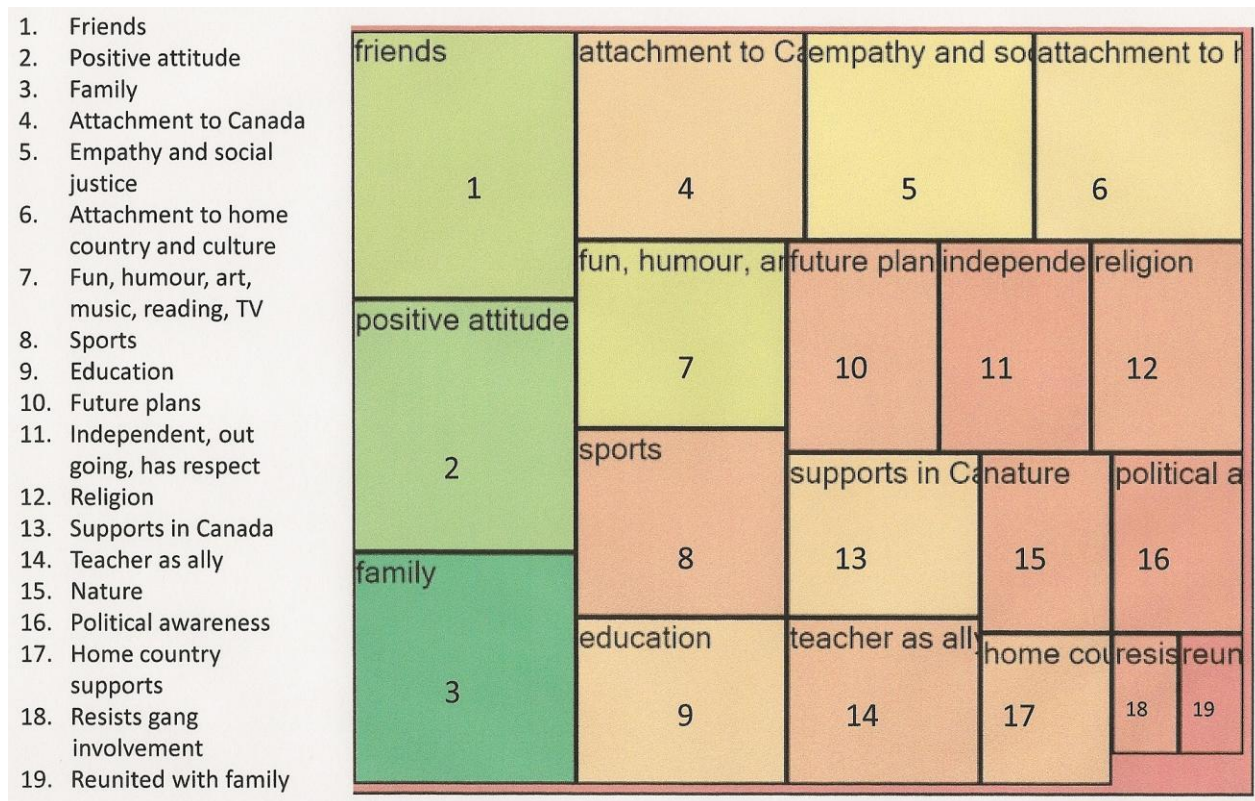


Figure 6.1. Student-identified factors that contribute to resilience.

6.1 Academic Supports

A positive, safe school climate with trusted and nurturing adult allies is critical for the promotion and support of resilient refugee and immigrant youth. School staff plays a fundamental role in supporting the successful integration of immigrant and refugee youth into Canadian society by enhancing academic, social, and emotional wellbeing. When students feel that school is a safe place where all adults advocate for youth and foster success, the experiences can be transformational, with life-long positive outcomes.

School-based programs focusing on a sense of belonging provide a foundation for culturally different youth to bond and build trust with teachers, to extend those skills into creating healthy peer relationships, and finally to building community (Pike et al., 2008). Trust

is a component of social capital (Kovalaninen, 2005); therefore, learning to trust translates into increased civic participation and socio-economic development. A positive school climate can help youth cope with the negative aspects of forced migration. “Teachers may not deal with trauma directly, but they are part of the healing process. They give their students order and predictability. After the chaos and confusion of their lives, nothing is more comforting than routines” (Pipher, 2002, p. 115). A greater sense of school belonging is associated with lower depression and higher self-efficacy in youth, regardless of the level of past exposure to adversities (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). Although schools have traditionally focused on the academic needs of youth as an independent variable, it has been shown that emotional wellbeing is essential for academic and social success (Brendtro et al., 2009; Watson, 2003). The challenge is for school administrators and teachers to consciously create conditions that foster emotional wellbeing in a student population with such a diverse experiences and needs.

6.1.1 Attachment to School

Without a doubt, the student participants in this study showed a high level of attachment to their Saskatchewan school, where learning extended beyond academics to include adjustment to culture and to the development of strategies to cope with personal and family challenges. Several participants voiced their thankfulness for teacher allies who offered emotional support and created a welcoming and safe learning atmosphere. These youth recognized the benefits of acquiring education, and demonstrated appreciation for the school system in Canada. After a peer interview with YG, November wrote, *“YG's favorite class is English because he likes to learn English. He never wants to skip.”* Oscar also stated that his English class was important: *“In this semester in English class I learn so many new word and how to write the good sentence.*

I know how to use now. In English class not just increase my writing and it increase my reading too.” The importance of school was also voiced by Adnan who said:

I am able to learn English and study more than ever before . . . [This school] is a good school. [It] has many students and many different classes for me to choose from. [I] especially enjoy the EAL classes because they help me to understand my school work better as well as everyday life. Before I moved here, I did not have the opportunity to go to school so I am very thankful to this system.

Tim Tom’s attachment to school was not as straightforward. He described his learning journey after being removed from the current school for one semester, and then being allowed to return subsequent to passing his classes in the transfer school:

Another thing I learned is that if I do better in my classes and get better marks school is more fun and exciting. Last year I didn't get any good marks mostly because I didn't study. I got really frustrated and didn't really want to go to school anymore. I started skipping a lot and didn't do my homework. This semester I only had good marks and its more fun.

Tim Tom’s scenario demonstrates a very subtle but important factor in supporting youth to become resilient.

If academics had been the predominant concern for this young man, he could have stayed in the school to which he was transferred. However, he displayed a sense of attachment by asking to return to the school he had been forced to leave. Tim Tom’s explanation was that he learned that school could be fun, which corresponds with the concept that a sense of belonging has numerous constructive effects including a positive attitude toward learning and one’s self as

reflected in higher attendance and retention rates (Brendtro et al., 2009; Pike et al., 2008; Zwarych, 2004).

While Tim Tom expressed his preference for the school in a somewhat guarded fashion, Halwa was able to explicitly express her attachment. When Halwa made the decision to move to Ontario to help her mother, her weekend journals reflected her great attachment to the school and to one particular teacher, Mr. Jack: *“I loved this school nice teachers I enjoyed. I wish I could come to school. I will miss you Mr. [Jack] and my other teachers and some students. I will miss this school.”* The close bond that develops between students and teachers as a factor of resilience requires further exploration.

6.1.2 Teachers as Allies

Students’ attachment to teachers appears as a particularly important element in developing resilience and deserves closer consideration. Since school fills a major portion of youths’ daily lives, and teachers play a predominant role in providing youth the guidance and information required to be successful in the larger community (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Wilkinson, 2002), it is pertinent to examine students’ perceptions of *good* teachers. During this study, the student participants made no significant complaints or negative comments about Canadian teachers; instead, remarks focused on the positive aspects as several participants identified the characteristics of teacher allies. Adnan wrote:

All my teachers help me. Teachers they’re helpful. They explain anything you don’t understand. They make easy for you. . . . They’re teaching us what we need for our future. Right, and like think about it. Why teachers wake up in the morning, come to school, and teach us something? Think about it. [Teachers] can go home and sleep . . . but why the teacher not? Because . . . they need to make a better future for teenagers.

A positive youth-identified factor such as physical safety is expected in Canadian school culture, yet the more subtle aspects that support student wellbeing are not as frequently addressed. Considering the positive aspects of school from a youth perspective brings attention to the value of teachers' acts of kindness and compassion.

Feeling safe and emotionally comfortable with teachers was identified by students as being important. Oscar said, *"Here the teachers are very nice. They don't hit the people and yell. If you need help the teachers are very friendly to help you."* Marty described how some teachers create a welcoming atmosphere for students to ask questions: *"Some teachers are good to ask. . . . For example my biology teacher says, 'The meaning is this, and if you have any other questions just tell me.' And she feels comfortable with my questions."* For Sandman, teachers created bridges to the larger community.

With few social supports in the city, Sandman identified school staff as a major support. Because of teachers' suggestions and guidance, Sandman was introduced to classes and extracurricular programs that helped him cope with his emotional challenges:

[Teachers] gave me the opportunity to go to that T-shirt class, and there was lots of other stuff [they] introduced me to, and that was really, really good thing for me, and it helped me quit my problems. Like that youth program; I still think about that program, and it was a really, really positive thing for me. And I still remember so many moments from there. And those three days there, I forgot lots of things; I didn't forget; I just deal much better with those problems.

Sandman also identified a support staff in the school as being a significant source of encouragement. This staff person who Sandman referred to as *"the perfect man"* not only supplied the young man with a used bicycle, but introduced him to bicycle sports and programs

to repair and donate equipment. As a result of experiences in class as well as through extracurricular activities, Sandman felt nurtured:

In history class [the teacher] was talking about my country, and I described it. And the reason I did that was I knew that my teacher actually cares and listens to me. . . . There are lots of really good teachers in that school. . . . There are lots of good teachers who know about things and care about things.

Teachers also identified the value of supporting youth to become resilient.

Mr. Jack, a teacher participant in the study, reflected on the importance of positive teacher-student interaction:

I think EAL kids . . . really are interested in being cared for, like they tend to want a relationship. Like when I talked about my grade tens last semester . . . I had five kids from China . . . Afghanistan and Pakistan. . . . And all those kids when I see them in the hallway this semester, they search me out with their eyes because they want to connect. And I think they really, really want to be cared for in an authentic way not sort of “Hi how are you?” They want relationships . . . I don’t think they had relationships with their teachers, and if they did they were pretty bad.

Mr. Jack’s perceptions are confirmed by the student participants’ narratives regarding the value of caring educators.

The importance of feeling safe and welcome was illustrated in Adnan’s comparison of schools. First, he commented on his teachers in Winnipeg, “*The teachers there were good and nice . . . I used to like my teacher. She so nice. . . . One thing I liked about that school there are good friend and good teacher.*” In regards to the Saskatchewan school, Adnan said, “*I am feeling more comfortable at [this school] because I have a lot of friends and nice teachers . . . I*

want to thank all teaches to teach me new stuff thank you so much for help me.” Adnan’s words demonstrated that youth place great value on their positive interactions with teachers.

Relationship-building with students was also a priority for the teacher participants, and one common strategy in this pursuit was storytelling.

Through this study, I learned that stories can play a role in developing stronger schools and communities by creating an atmosphere of caring and understanding. The three teacher participants provided methods of developing trusting relationships with their students. The teachers learned from their students’ stories and adjusted their educational programs to meet students’ needs. Ms. G. Explained how she used personal storytelling in her class:

The first year I [used storytelling] at the end of the year, and because I found out such valuable information about the kids, I regretted very much that I hadn’t done it sooner in the semester. So since then, I’ve done it right at the beginning.

Through storytelling, Mr. Jack learned about the students’ interest in sports and used this topic to start a conversation, develop a sense of trust, and then delve into more personal matters:

Many of these kids from different parts of the world are into things like soccer and cricket. We get talking about why they like those sports, and then you find out they have a fierce loyalty to the countries they’re from, and then from there spills into, “What do you think about what just happened in Egypt?” And they’ll share their thoughts.

Miss O. S. saw the stories of EAL learners as a vehicle to bring history and current events into the classroom:

I think the regular classroom teachers, [are] missing out on so much . . . on knowing these amazing young people. And the rest of the class is missing that too . . . I think of the example of the history class many of our students were in last winter, and one of the

things the teacher was talking about was revolution, and of course studying the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and not realizing that we have students who are from countries that are in a revolution right this minute, and the perspective they can have. I think of the student [from Iran] who was in contact, via email and Facebook, and Twitter, with people who were actually in the revolution, and yet here we are teaching out of this old textbook something that happened hundreds of years ago. There's less relevance to that, whereas I think students would have been fascinated to know: "Hey, I'm texting someone who's right there in Tehran right now." I think, we, the teachers, miss all kinds of opportunities to make things real and relevant, and it's just by asking students to share their own experiences.

Miss O. S. Recognized that teachers might feel overwhelmed by students' stories, and she offered words of assurance:

[Teachers] worry that if they open something up, they'll be responsible for fixing it, so I guess it's a matter of educating teachers about the purpose of storytelling. . . . [I]t doesn't mean that you're fixing anything . . . it helps to have someone to listen. . . . We sometimes think that we have to do something big to connect with the student or help the student, but we don't. I mean sometimes there might be situations, but really it's being there, showing we care; it's listening. So with the storytelling it's not that we have to figure out a way to solve all the issues. It's listening to the student tell what the problem is.

Active listening by teachers requires them to create a classroom atmosphere of empathetic listening which is non-judgmental and leads to a climate of trust. Roessingh (2004) recognizes this phenomenon of school staff stewardship as a major factor that engenders a sense of trust and

encourages students to stay involved in school. Trust is related to learning because as learners, we are taking a risk; we make ourselves vulnerable. “Trust makes it safe to be vulnerable. And having a sense of safety cannot be underestimated” (Levin & Kline, 2006, p. 364). Family and social networks also play a significant role in enhancing the development of resilient youth.

6.2 Family and Social Supports

The support of family members is a significant protective factor for the wellbeing of youth (Arafat & Musleh, 2006; McCubbin et al., 2008). Several student-identified factors are specific to family assistance. Family members previously resettled in Canada offer scaffolding and guidance into the new culture. Connections to family members in students’ countries of origin and the passing down of family histories strengthens identities. The support of siblings is identified as being very important to the wellbeing of youth. Finally, a phenomenon that is defined as *etic* or common across cultures (SpringerReference, 2013) is attachment to predominant caregivers (McAdam-Crisp, 2006), and it is shown as a crucial protective factor. Although the behaviours which illustrate attachment to family vary in accordance to the context as well as students’ cultures, the affective result is consistent. The emotionally moving stories created by student participants clearly demonstrate the importance of family in the development of resilient children.

6.2.1 Family Assistance with Resettlement

Youth in this study expressed that a significant function of the family is to assist with resettlement. Pearl, November, and Halwa talked about the benefits of having established family members to help newcomers settle in Canada. Pearl, her sister, and mother followed an older, married sister to Canada: *“My [second] sister was there first when we came here. Her*

grandparents were there, and . . . she [had] not too much trouble . . . my brother was here and he helped me a lot.” November was reunited with an uncle who immigrated three years earlier:

We went to one of my uncle's, who had come to Canada years before us, and stayed at his home for 3 days. After that we got our own home one block away, and stayed there for four months before coming here to [this city], Saskatchewan.

When Halwa moved to Saskatchewan to stay in touch with her sister, her brother-in-law helped with resettlement:

[M]y sister was happy to buy every thing I need. I was happy to have my sister. . . . I asked my brother in law witch [sic] school I have to go. Because he know [this city]. he [lived] before here he tell me go to [this school]. I came to [this school].

Understandably, previously settled family members ease the stress of arrival for newcomers.

This is explained by Pearl as having less “*trouble*.” Established adult supports remove a great deal of the pressure from youth who might otherwise become responsible for making arrangements for their non-English speaking parents. At the opposite end of the migration spectrum, family members who remain in the country of origin can also play an important role in the wellbeing of youth by maintaining culture and family unity.

6.2.2 Family Connections with the Past

Staying connected to absent family members often plays a meaningful function in the wellbeing of youth. The student participants identified specific ways in which this was manifest. Two students spoke of family history stories passed from generation to generation as a means of transmitting cultural values. One student commented on the importance of staying connected to her primary caregiver left in a country of refuge, and two students were able to return to their countries of origin to reconnect with family members, culture, and history. Maintaining the

memory of deceased family members connected these youth to their country of origin and family values. Whether they stayed in touch with family through technological means or family history stories, the bonds played an important role in providing comforting thoughts and enhancing their wellbeing.

Unlike immigrants to Canada in earlier eras who never returned to their land of birth, communication and travel in the twenty-first century increases opportunities to stay connected with support networks around the globe. Technological advancement and affordable travel have reduced the spatial and psychological separation between migrants and their countries of origin or refuge (Vasey & Manderson, 2010; Weinfeld & Wilkinson, 1999), and, in many ways, this decreases the stress of being separated from loved ones who can offer guidance and nurturing. While interactions with family are important for people of all ages, for youth faced with the challenges of moving into adulthood while adjusting to a new culture, these supports are vital to a strong sense of self and emotional wellbeing.

Students spoke of staying tied to family by telephone and through travel to their countries of birth. Halwa maintained a strong relationship with her grandmother by telephone: “*I call Kenya my grandma she is like my mother she so happy to talk to me. I think my grandma she is to [sic] old but she can talk.*” The relative ease of travel in the twenty-first century enabled Pearl to return to Pakistan to visit family: “*When we went to home, my sister and everyone, my whole family, they was there and so happy to see us. It’s good.*” Hamid also returned to his country of birth, Afghanistan, where he met the extended family members of which his mother often spoke:

It was a sunny and warm day when I saw the tears on my mother's face as she approached my uncle. I was carrying the baggage behind her as my uncle shouted,

"Leave it!" with a sound of a cry. . . . For about twenty years my mom did not see her parents and siblings, and she finally saw them. Now that we entered her old house, my cousins approached me, and shook my hand. . . . My mom and my grandmother cried for a bit when they saw each other after so long. She also introduced me to her family; it was really a pleasure to meet my relatives.

This personal connection to family members had a very strong emotional impact on the student participants; so too do the stories of relatives who have died.

Sustaining the memory of deceased family members was shown to be important by two youth. Loso's mother kept the family history relevant for her children: *"My grandmother's name was [Fatima]. My mother always telling something about her."* Pearl first spoke of staying attached to deceased relatives through her name:

Right after I was born, my dad gave me my name [Pearl] which means peace of mind. He gave me this name because he had a sister. Her name was [Pearl]. Unfortunately she died and for remembering her, my dad gave me this name.

Second, Pearl's family helped preserve an attachment to her father through stories:

Now I want to tell some thing about my dad he is not any more he died when I was just six months old. I don't know any thing about him just those things that my mom and my sisters told me. But he is alive in my mind and my heart. I know he was a really good and nice father because my sisters told me. I wish I could see him just at once but I can't I know.

In addition to the support of established relatives, family who remained in the country of origin or the memory of deceased family members, siblings also played a significant role in supporting the wellbeing of these youth.

6.2.3 Attachment to Siblings

Attachment to siblings who act as friends and confidants was identified as a strong protective factor by the youth participants. Some students found a sibling's support a replacement for non-existing parental and peer support. Other students showed a high level of attachment to siblings in addition to their positive relationship with parents. A close bond to siblings was evident in the stories of youth participants with very different migration experiences.

Sandman's brother offered a great deal of support in the adjustment to school and Canadian culture: *"If I wasn't with my brother, I would feel really, really, really lonely in that school."* Halwa's attachment to her sister became a source of great happiness during a very difficult time of adjustment:

Me and my sister went shopping for her baby she is expecting soon, I bought something nice but I didn't tell her because I want her to be surprised. [S]he is so happy for the baby . . . she will be the luckiest person in my family because everyone is excited for it. I can't wait for the day the baby comes, I won't come to school the day because I will [be] to[o] excite[d]. It will be the happiest day of my life. The best part is I get to name the baby.

This close connection to siblings was displayed by other student participants as well.

Tim Tom, Adnan, Pearl, and Marty talked or wrote about their siblings with a sense of pride and admiration. Tim Tom proudly brought to class a book written and illustrated by his elementary-aged sibling. Adnan's brothers provided safety and security in an often inhospitable environment: *"Brothers are always important. . . . If you fight with other guys your brothers can help you. You know brothers they fight all the time but it is all good."* Pearl described how

important her third sister had been when they first arrived: *“I don’t know anything. . . . She’s smart; she knows everything. . . . When first she was here, she said, ‘I want to quit school,’ and I said, ‘What would I do in school if I need help?’”* Marty’s relationship with his older brothers was very strong despite several relocations:

I had a very good life with my family especially with my brothers. . . . They would trick me by telling me something wrong or throw water on me. When I was a kid I had a very good family but four years ago one of my brothers went to Hungary for his studies. Since then it wasn’t the same. . . . Before he went there we were hanging out together with my other brother. We were going to the movies, to the park, to play pools etc. . . .

My second older brother Mohammad is in Sweden now. I haven’t seen him for eight months. He was closer to me than my oldest brother. He helped me with my lessons and with that help I was succeed to go to one of the best schools in my city. I really missed him.

For some student participants, cousins were identified as siblings because of their close bond.

Due to the one-child policy in China, many youth do not have sibling support, so cousins become very close. Oscar’s description of his relationship with his cousin, whom he refers to as the second most important person in his life, demonstrates the important role of family mentorship: *“[H]e always teach me Math, Chinese. If I don’t [know] how to do, he must to help me do the homework finish. He show me study is very important. So he change my life.”*

November also wrote about a very close relationship to his cousins with whom he lived.

Typically, November’s writing was minimal, but he was much more open when writing about the cousins he related to as siblings:

When I was in Pakistan, I lived with my Father's Full [sic] family, and sometimes we used to go to my mother's parents' home for a few days. I liked going to our grandparent's on my mother's side, they lived in a big house with a black gate. . . . It was one of our favourite places.

After migrating to Canada, November depended on his younger sister for companionship:

My sister is important to me because when I didn't have my cousins or friends to play with I could always play with her. . . . My sister is a year younger than me, so we don't think very differently.

The stories of culturally-diverse students demonstrate the universal importance of family.

Attachment to siblings and close relatives plays an important role in the lives of the student participants. In the next section, I present student-generated stories to show that the bond to a primary caregiver continues to be a prominent factor that supports wellbeing and resilience.

6.2.3 Attachment to a Primary Caregiver

The student participants often discussed their close connection to primary caregivers, which McAdam-Crisp (2006) describes as a phenomenon that is etic or common across cultures. While most of the youth participants shared stories of their close bond with parents, Halwa frequently recounted her great attachment to her grandmother who had become a surrogate parent when Halwa's mother left to find work: *"My grandma stayed in Kenya and she took care of me. I was happy to have my grandma. She is a really nice grandma."* Years later when Halwa's mother returned in the night, it frightened Halwa, who had become so attached to her grandmother. It took a great deal of time for Halwa to understand that her *"mother wasn't a bad mother."* Several years later, as Halwa's family entered the foreboding atmosphere of Kakuma refugee camp, the mother and child bond was beginning to develop: *"My mother told me*

‘everything will be alright.’ [I] said ok. After 5 years everything was alright. After that my mother go back to business I was happy to have my mother.” Through her journal entries, it was clear that although Halwa attempted to reconcile the still strained relationship with her mother, her feeling of responsibility for her parent did not engender a feeling of love; her deepest attachment remained with her grandmother who had been her primary caregiver. Halwa’s experience is not unusual among refugee newcomers.

An enduring bond is created when a surrogate caregiver provides the security a parent cannot. Clarkson (2011) tells the childhood story of retired Canadian government official, Fred Bild who was one of many Jewish children harboured by Christian families in rural Europe during the Second World War. Clarkson (2011) writes, “You can’t help but feel that these people became Fred’s true family because they provided stability and love instead of the tension and fear in which he had spent his early childhood” (p. 71). The strength of the surrogate bond is demonstrated by Bild’s maintenance of a life-long relationship with his caregivers even after the post-war reunification with his mother.

As with Halwa and Bild, the separation of children from parents occurs because parents strive to place their children in a secure environment when parents are forced to migrate or flee. In many situations, such youths are jeopardized a second time when they are removed from the loving bond of a surrogate parent. For youths who are able to stay with their primary caregivers in spite of forced migration and resettlement, the bond is profoundly strong.

This emotional attachment is a protective factor because “children are better able to cope if their parents can maintain a sense of stability and contentment in the face of adversity” (McAdam-Crisp, 2006, p. 469). The reflective essays for grade eleven English Language Arts (ELA 20) clearly reflect the student participants’ great emotion and appreciation for their

parents' love, protection, and sacrifice. The students recount traditional family scenarios with mothers providing care-giving and protection to children while fathers are seen as the decision-makers and providers of material necessities. These youth identify both parents as instructors of moral and religious values, which is important because "parents' cultural values play a significant role in psychosocial adjustment" (Beiser, Shik, & Curyk, as cited in Theron, 2011, p. 803).

Seven of the eight students in ELA 20 wrote about their parents being the most important people in their lives. As the son of a visiting scholar to Saskatchewan, Marty explained how his parents helped him cope with the temporary, but challenging change in cultures: "*My parents always were my best people. I can't imagine my life without them. They helped me . . . and also they supported me with their love, their happines[s]. I love them because of their support and guidance they are giving me.*"

Oscar wrote, "*My parents change my life, because they took me in Canada.*" As a 20-year-old, Oscar outlined the ways he expected his family to influence his life in the near future. This included the culturally-expected practice of parents choosing a marriage partner for their child and taking an active role in raising grandchildren. Oscar saw the importance of adult children returning these good deeds by caring for their elders.

As was typical for him, November offered minimal, matter-of-fact, details to illustrate why he had identified his parents as the first two of three most important people in his life:

My mother raised me and taught me what to do and what not to do. My mother was a very important part of my childhood and still is now. . . . My father is important to me. . . . He did a job that payed [sic] for my clothes, food and toys.

In contrast, Pearl's lengthy and sentimental essay depicted a mother's responsibility to protect her children, which was what Pearl's mother did when doctors recommended that Pearl, at the age of eight, have surgery to removed kidney stones. Fearing the dangers of an operation, Pearl's mother found an alternate, successful treatment. Pearl's story ends with this paragraph:

Today I am a healthy girl and I am happy. This all because of my mom. Now I am 18 years old girl even now she take care of me like a little child because she wants me to do the right things and not go to bad ways. I think this shows that how much she loves me.

Most poignant were the stories written by three of the students who, with their families, escaped their homelands in life-threatening situations and arrived in Canada as refugees. First is Loso's story of his devotion to his parents who taught him values and life skills while living in the midst of poverty and persecution:

My mother is very very very important. . . . My father [he's] in Africa I miss him so much [he's] important to me. . . . He is a good person. He helped me a lot. He wants me to be a good person like him. . . . He taught me a lot.

Loso's brother Adnan wrote prolifically and emotionally about his fidelity for his parents:

My mother is the most important person to me because she is the only person I could not live without. I love her so much because she gave every thing she could. . . . She want to make my future better. . . .

My father is important to me too because he's the one who told me to not do bad things in my life. I listen to him when he tells me something. He doesn't like it when I do bad things. He is important because he taught me how to drive a car and how to fix it as well. That's why I love my father so much.

YG, who Miss O.S. often referred to as “*an old soul*” because of his quiet thoughtfulness, poetically described his immense appreciation for his mother and father’s sacrifices:

Anything my mom and my dad did all for me. . . . My dear parents are my blood and my life. I always need my parents help when I don’t know how to do something. Sometimes I get sick or have an accident usually I need my parents help everywhere anytime.

My dad always does all the thinking and the planning in his brain when my parents raise up my brothers and sisters. Usually he was to figure it out how his sons and my daughters to be like a good person. During that time my dad had two jobs. He worked as farmer and as military staff. He can’t write and re[a]d. But he can speak t[h]ree or four languages. . . . My dad taught me some work to do. I never forget this words; he said “it’s hard to build anything . . . if frustration bitterness and a mood of helplessness prevails.”

The strong connection between attachment to family and the development of a strong identity is revealed in the students’ stories about how they received their names. In a class discussion, students shared the meanings of their names, how they received their names, and then reflected on the love and care that name-giving symbolizes. For example, with guidance from Ms. O.S., November surmised that his name, which he translated as “*man with a long beard*”, symbolizes his parents’ wish for him to have a long life. Although Oscar found that his name generated stress because it means his parents want him to be better than other people, he came to understand that his parents bestowed this name with love and caring. A similar scenario was presented by Marty, whose name means leader. Other students showed a bond to their names because their parents had chosen it with great thought. Adnan said, “*I don’t know why they picked this name but I loved it.*” Pearl wrote, “*My dad gave me my name [PEARL]. I like this*

name and don't want to change it.” Tim Tom’s explanation of his name led to an in-depth account of how his parents met and the circumstances under which they chose his name. YG’s story of his name was made more poignant by the inclusion of references to class struggles:

My name actually means (gold + yellow) because when my mom was pregnant with me and my dad was to [f]ound the fish in the stream there after he saw the gold rain beside the stream. Another thing my mom told me almost all the Burmese people love gold. . . . They do not have enough money to buy gold.

Most importantly, the students’ stories demonstrate that youth develop an attachment to their parents through the sharing of important historical markers in their lives (McCubbin et al., 2008). Through stories, youth build a strong identity, which is a protective factor. The benefits of the close family bonds and strong values of refugees and immigrants were identified in an interview with Mr. Jack: “[W]hen I walk into [a store] on Saturday night . . . people from other parts of the world are there shopping with their entire family. They do it as a family event.” Mr. Jack related family discussions to refugee and immigrant youths’ successful academic performance:

I asked a couple of the students about some of the issues that were going on in [their home country], and their concern is that the government is corrupt. They go into deep conversations in their weekend journals if I ask them a question [about] world events. They don't give you a grade nine cliché answer. They've thought about it, and they've obviously talked to their parents about . . . big picture stuff.

Mr. Jack identified the positive emotional impact of immigrant and refugees’ close family bond:

[The students] finished a blog entry . . . and it's on inspiration. They had to define it. And the question I had for them was, “Who inspires you?” And all of these kids from other parts of the world said it's their parents; where many of the kids who were born

here said no one inspired them or “I inspire myself” or it was someone who is a celebrity. Very few of them said it's their parents, so their perspective on family is different.

In brief, the participants in this study identified several aspects of family support. First, family members already established in Canada eased the struggles of migration by acting as culture brokers. Alternately, staying connected to family support networks in the country of origin as well as maintaining family history stories of deceased family members created connectedness and strength. Stories of personal histories, such as name-giving, helped youth develop cultural pride and a strong sense of self. Once in Canada, close relationships with siblings provided a sense of safety and emotional wellbeing with in spite of the loss of cultural peers. Most importantly, parents who sustained loving relationships in the midst of chaos, danger, and relocation were able to instil devotion, respect and reciprocity within their children.

Attachment to siblings and primary, biological or surrogate caregivers were significant protective factors. Aspects of resilience that developed in positive family relationships were “connecting to one another using caring communication; creating generational and cultural continuity; building trust and positive identity rooted in the family; constructive and effective conflict resolution; and problem solving” (BRYCS Brief, 2010, p. 3). Family and siblings assisted the youth in this study cope with the challenges of adjusting to a new culture and school system. The final entity on which the student participants frequently relied was their peers.

6.2.4 Positive Peer Relationships

Studies have shown that in certain cases peer support can be more influential than parental support in determining the wellbeing of immigrant and refugee youth (Galler & Sher, 2010). This aspect of the newcomer experience was broached in novel studies and creative

writing assignments which help youth “process their experiences and explore paths for growth from a safe emotional distance” (Berger, 2008, p. 102). Such was the environment in ELA 20.

Miss O.S. offered the students numerous activities to consider peer support and the value of teenage friendships. The participating youth showed a great appreciation for personal relationships both within and beyond the EAL program. Marty pointed out the importance of friends being able to trust each other and share secrets. Oscar wrote that friendship is so important it can change a person’s life. In another writing assignment, Oscar recognized the support of a fellow Chinese student he met at school: *“In Canada, I not have a lot of friends. [This friend] always took me go everywhere help me go to find the job [and] help me too much.”* For Loso, friends, like brothers, fulfilled his need for fun: *“Friends are important too because you can have fun with them. You can play with them. I like my brothers and friends. It is important for me to have them.”* The need for companionship is reflected in Sandman’s statement: *“Someone to talk to even when you do some kind of stupid things [and] laughing, you forget the bad things that happen, and you just leave that behind and just continue living.”* Halwa wrote of the attachment that developed with the people who helped her resettle: *“I went B C to visit my friend. She is nice friend she is the one who help me when we move to Canada . . . she is my best friend.”* Peers also played a significant role in offering students a sense of safety and feelings of acceptance.

Adnan, Sandman, and YG articulated the connection between friends and a sense of inclusion. Part of Adnan’s desire to remain in Saskatchewan was because of the positive friends he had developed: *“I enjoy hanging out with my friends at safe parties. I have many new friends here that are positive. I hang out with them so much sometimes, when I am busy they keep asking me to hang out.”* Sandman’s description of peer support was less intimate but contained

a need for recognition and respect: *“Some students actually listened to me. I’m not sure if they really cared about it, but they listened to me, and that’s something good I think.”* Acceptance also came to the fore in YG’s writing, which he illustrated with photos taken on a school field trip:

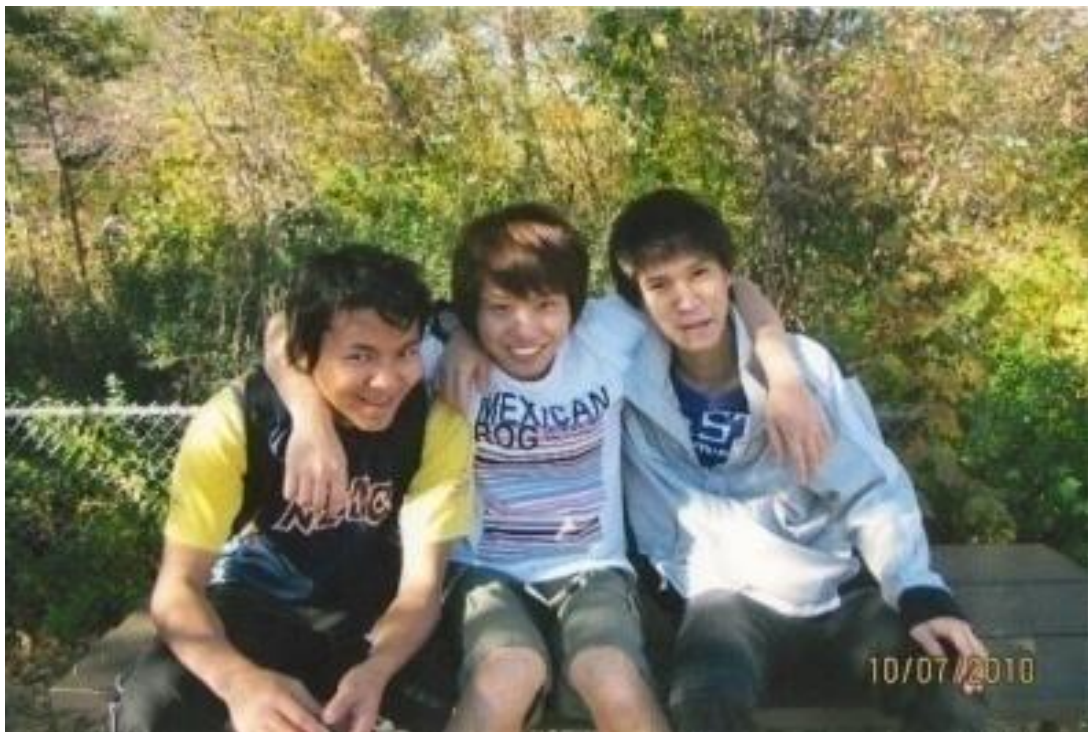


Figure 6.2. YG’s photo of his school field trip.



Figure 6.3. YG's second photo of his school field trip.

His name is November . . . He is my partner and also my friend. Sometimes if I didn't understand something he will help me. Sometimes I ask him questions and he totally accepts me and tells me the answer.

Marty articulated how he increased his circle of friends over time, which helped him feel much happier in Saskatchewan:

Passing time helped me to find more friends. They're outside this school and in school, so I know 7 people in [this city]. [The students outside the school] are my friends, but I haven't seen them for 2 months. We chat, but the one time I went to their house; I went to church. In summer, I registered for [a settlement agency youth program], and we went hiking, and they are my best friends in [this city].

Students who were accustomed to living in large communities or families had a great need to reproduce the atmosphere of physical closeness. For example, Sandman described his

home city as being “*so crowded that it’s sometimes hard to feel lonely. It’s possible to make a friend in just five minutes.*” Coming from a large extended family and life in a crowded refugee camp, it appeared that Halwa preferred to be surrounded by people because she seldom spent time alone in Canada. Halwa’s relationships took many forms, but clearly her friends played a crucial role in providing emotional and social support. They had become a surrogate family to provide Halwa with healthy, nurturing relationships. Her weekend journals frequently recounted time spent with friends in a very relaxed, uneventful atmosphere. She described chatting, “*chilling*”, strolling in the park, and shopping. Often, she wrote about spending the night with friends and occasionally visiting friends out of town. As she contemplated her move to Ontario, the support of her friends became the focus of her writing:

We chill and talk about how I want leave [this city] they was mad me. Because I am leave they told me I don’t have to leave . . . but I have to. They are not happy with out me they said I am the best friend ever I hate leave with out my friends. But they can’t come with me because they go to school here and the parent l[i]ve here two [sic]. So they can’t come with me and they grow up in [this city]. But I am happy because we seeing each other in the face book or email or call each other.

The friendship of culturally-similar youth was comforting. The relationships developed in the EAL classroom presented youth with new world views, companionship, and both bonding and bridging capital to enhance emotional wellbeing and social adjustment to Canada.

Like many other students, Oscar’s EAL friends were his only cohorts outside his cultural community. Oscar wrote: “*YG is my classmate and he is my best friend, too. YG is [moving] to other place, but I so miss [him]. I hope YG everything well in new place*”. For Pearl, friends outside school were not only limited to people within her community, but limited even more to

only females in that group. Therefore, the opportunity to speak to male peers was a novelty. Pearl wrote, *“I did an interview with Adnan. . . . It was nice to talking to him because it gives me more information about my class mates.”* Both Oscar and Pearl originated from culturally homogeneous countries and had no opportunities to meet culturally-different friends until they came to Canada.

The relationships students build within the EAL community played an important role in fulfilling the need for emotional and physical closeness as well as being a social learning experience. New friends provided a great source of comfort during the difficult transition to settlement in Canada. The bustling classrooms and animated lunch hour conversations reproduced the atmosphere of the crowded cities for which EAL youth often long. The friendships developed in the EAL classroom with students from such diverse backgrounds in a Canadian context broaden youths’ cultural perspectives. Marty and Miss O. S. Offered advice on how to encourage positive peer relationships.

Marty gave suggestions about developing a support program similar to what existed in his Iranian school:

[I]f someone goes to an Iranian schools, students go and talk to them, they are more friendly. They make a new group, and for example hang out with them, something like that, but here, I don’t feel it . . . I think we can’t change the students, but maybe they can make a program so if some students want to know new students, something like that.

Miss O. S. Reflected on bringing together Canadian-born youth and EAL students to raise awareness of immigrant and refugee issues:

When I was working with the modified grade twelve English class, we were talking about Canadian immigration and people coming to Canada, and we set up interviews where

[non-EAL] grade twelve [students] came in and interviewed some of our [EAL] students. Most of it was at a pretty superficial level. . . . It was a fifteen minute interview, and I don't think any of our EAL students shared anything that was really personal, but they were bringing out the globe and showing, "Here's where I was born. Here's where I moved to. Then my family came here." I think had there been opportunities to keep going a lot more would have been shared, so I think it's possible [to integrate youth]. It would just take a lot of planning, and it has to be the right kind of mix of students too.

The importance of social support to the lives of youth cannot be understated. Support from teachers and attachment to primary caregivers and siblings help youth face enormous pre- and post-migration challenges. A social support that was the focus of the student participants' written submissions, class conversations, and personal interviews was the need for friends in Canada. The companionship of peers in the EAL classroom was highly valued, and relationships in the larger school community were considered a great accomplishment.

6.3 Discussion

Youth who are new to Canada have a variety of familial and social supports that buffer risk and support resilience. Family members have the potential to create a protective barrier for refugee and immigrant youth faced with the challenges of relocation in addition to the natural, biological adjustments into adulthood. In her recent book of migrants' stories of loss and transformation, Clarkson (2011) identifies the support of family as a principal protective factor:

I feel humbled by the tremendous strength and resilience [immigrants and refugees] have; I believe their sense of family is particularly strong because of the lack of legal and democratic structure in their home countries. It is this identification with family that I

find most moving, and it helps us all remember that the basis for human nurturing and love lies in the family. (p. 228)

With the understanding that families play a critical role in the academic, social, and emotional success of migrant youth, it is imperative that all efforts be made by governments to keep families intact (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2008).

My observations in this study and my experience over the years point to the negative impact of Canadian immigration policies on family unification. Maintaining the foundation of family could be done in three ways. First, governments could revise policies that are counterproductive to developing resilient youth by changing restrictive immigration laws that exclude children born after parents' application for asylum. Second, policies could be created to facilitate earlier reunification of children with parents who entered Canada with specific employment visas (Carman, 2012). Third, allowing families to sponsor grandparents who play a major role as surrogate parents can add stability to youths' lives.

Over the years, I have witnessed the reunification of children whose mothers entered Canada as caregivers or nannies. My experience is confirmed by the research of others on this type of situation. Typically, the children have had minimal contact with their mothers for several years, and therefore demonstrate a strong attachment to an alternate primary caregiver who is often a grandparent (Arlan, Shrestha, & Wingo, 2008; Crawford-Brown, 1999). In the Caribbean, "these so-called 'barrel children' are left without parental guidance or adult supervision and with access to significant material resources in the form of cash remittances and barrels of clothing and toys sent by absentee parents" (UNICEF Jamaica, n.d., p.1). Despite the increase in material wealth, separating children from their major caregiver is in opposition to supporting the development of resilient youth. The long delay in allowing women to sponsor

their children intensifies the challenge of reunification and family stability (Carman, 2012). For many barrel children, “the psychological scars have been great and have been troubling factors unto the second, third and fourth generations” (Alleyne, 2006, p. 1). If children could be brought to Canada sooner or grandparents could accompany their grandchildren, the transition would be easier and the protective factor of family would be maintained.

As demonstrated by the youth in this study, siblings, parents, and grandparents offer a great deal of support and play a significant role in creating protective buffers to outside stresses. Immigrant and refugee families arrive with many skills and attributes that have the potential to increase youths’ resilience. Despite poverty, minimal employment skills, and difficulty entering the work force, many parents are able to provide critical emotional support to their children. Therefore, assisting parents to support their children is essential in helping children and youth stay in school (Eglash, 2007).

Another factor that creates a positive school experience for youth is the opportunity to develop intercultural friendships. The phenomenon of ethnic diversity acting as a positive force in preparing children for school was found by Puchala, Vu, and Muhajarine (2010):

[F]or some children, the ability to empathize with others and a strong social support system may translate into pro-social and helping behaviours within the classroom setting and protect against negative emotionality or poor psychological adjustment (e.g., being unhappy or sad, anxious or fearful behaviour). Therefore, programs directed towards increasing interconnectedness among ethnic minority communities may increase school readiness. (p. 517)

The students in this study were well beyond the age of qualifying for programs that prepare children for school; secondary students with minimal first language education or interrupted

school experiences do require school readiness skills, however since they never had the opportunity to develop those before.

Supporting youth to develop relationships within the EAL program, the school, and the larger community is an important factor in developing social capital that can enhance emotional wellbeing and positive citizenship (Putnam, 2000), and offer guidance after having experienced challenging events (Capewell, 1999). Berger's (2008) suggestion of using a group model to work with immigrant adolescents to inspire post traumatic growth (PTG) is valuable because two goals can be achieved simultaneously:

First the group may serve as a source of social support and compensate for the loss of the natural peer group caused by immigration. Second, the group may offer models for PTG. A group composed of participants who have differing amounts of distance from traumatic stressors will increase the likelihood that some members have already reached PTG and can serve as role models to others. (p. 102)

Social events and activities provide opportunities for culturally different ways of healing. After the horrendous experiences of forced migration, violence and flight, many people want to dance, celebrate, and share food with friends. These are traditional and powerful ways of healing that are often overlooked in North American culture. Pipher (2002) writes that the newcomers she worked with "knew that before housing, jobs, medical care, or money, community is what heals. It is good to share pain, but what is really healing is to share joy" (p. 294). Developing trusting relationships opens more possibilities for healing activities in the community and breaks the isolation many immigrants and refugees experience.

The findings of this study are significant because they contribute a culturally-diverse, youth perspective of resilience that should take precedence in research designed to overcome

oppression and to build on the strengths of young people (Cameron et al., 2010; Giroux, 2005; Gunderson, 2000; Theron et al, 2011; Unger, 2001). The youth participants' stories can help adult allies enhance their understanding of needs and supports that are culturally-specific and those which are common across cultures (Coventry et al., 2003; Ingleby & Watters, 2002; Johnson et al., 2008; Rousseau & Guzder, 2008). The contributions of the youth in this study coincide with previous research findings that "peer support is an important element in determining the mental health of recent adolescent immigrants" (Galler & Sher, 2010, p. 93). Understanding what is meaningful to culturally-diverse youth is critical to the construction of appropriate programming (BRYCS, 2010). As a social constructionist, I am aware that understanding can be problematic.

Although I have striven to take the perspective of the student participants and present their findings with minimal editing, I am cognizant that meaning is socially constructed, and the words I use to describe my understanding influences a reader's interpretation. Schwandt (2007) explains that:

The language constituting the aim, methods, and significance of the practice is constantly being reinterpreted. This reinterpretation is inevitable given that we are language beings . . . We are not the ones in charge of language; language is in charge of us. (p. xxix).

Despite this relativity of meaning, Schwandt advises researchers to live with uncertainty and maintain a commitment to make judgements. It is therefore important for me to acknowledge the influence of my judgement on reporting what factors positively affect youth. This is particularly significant for the topic of the students' individual qualities that buffer risk because much was left to my interpretation.

Understanding personal attributes that boost the psychological resilience of youth is pertinent (Galler & Sher, 2010; Garbarino, 2008; Kristal-Andersson, 2001). This is the topic of Chapter Seven. Although the youth participants were not always able to articulate their individual qualities, beliefs or the protective habits which buffer risk, their strengths were demonstrated in their written and oral stories as well as the behaviours I observed in their classroom setting.

Chapter Seven

Strategies and Attributes for Growing Up Well

In order to challenge the prevailing public discourse maintaining that a newcomer to Canada is solely responsible for his or her success, I have shown that issues around migration and integration are complex. The student participants' stories in Chapters Four and Five of this study made it very clear that youth new to Canada face numerous academic and social challenges (Phan, 2002; Pirbhai-Illich, 2005). As shown in Chapter Six, youth participants who arrive as refugees and immigrants also have academic and social supports to cope with the natural changes of becoming young adults while adjusting to a new culture (Feldmann et al., 2007; Galler & Sher, 2010). In addition, students in this study demonstrated resilience in their personal strength and capacity to cope with adversity prior to and following migration (Barnard et al., 1999). This chapter will focus on the student participants' personal strategies, attributes, and resources for coping with very challenging circumstances.

Cognizant of the need to generalize with caution (Carswell & Carswell, 2008) because culture strongly influences an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and ways of understanding the world, there are common characteristics of resilient people across cultures (Norris & Alegria, 2008). Personality traits that act as a protective factor are: being hopeful and optimistic (Seligman, 1995); having a sense of agency or positive outlook regarding the ability to overcome difficult circumstances and learn from adversity (McEwen, 2007); the ability to use humour to cope with challenging situations (Cameron et al., 2010); and having empathy for others (Ungar, 2008). Resilient youth have the social skills to problem solve, to talk to others about concerns (Morland, 1999), and to change their coping strategies to fit the situation (Garrod et al., 2002).

In this chapter, I provide examples of the student participants' positive personal strategies and attitudes for coping with adversity. These youths identified valued sources of wellbeing such as a connection to nature, creative activities, and involvement in physically demanding activities that brought happiness and relief from overwhelming worries. The guiding principles of social justice and religion acted as a protective factor that provided rules for behaviour and the comfort of a higher power in times of change and uncertainty. Despite experiences of pre-immigration violence and great hardships in Canada, the students demonstrated a capacity to learn from adversity, be hopeful and have a sense of humour. A personal attribute that deserves particular attention is the youths' capacity to have empathy for others.

7.1 Valued Sources of Wellbeing

The student participants identified several sources of wellbeing that provided a sense of peace, a feeling of mastery, and a way to forget problems. Connections to nature, the arts, and sports provided a sense of comfort for students who had experienced difficult or traumatic events. Speaking of his *"difficult life"* as a child in a refugee camp, YG was able to find small glimmers of happiness in nature: *"I remember a long time my friend and me we will go to climb the mountain and we're smell the tree flower and my heart so best."* Pearl also identified nature as a source of solace in her children's story: *"It was a countryside place with peace and happiness. There was no way to be sad just happiness was in their lives."* Sandman reflected on the ever-changing but peaceful beauty of the Saskatchewan prairie: *"Oh, it's so beautiful here. I haven't been [to this rural area] for almost three weeks . . . it's so beautiful. I think that's the reason you like prairies. That's the first time I started to like it. I prefer forest."* In addition to the pleasures brought by nature, Sandman spoke of creative activities as a positive factor.

Music, art, and creative, hands-on activities were valued sources of energy, comfort and relaxation that Sandman identified for himself, his brother and friend. First he spoke of the invigorating role of music:

But music, music. Oh God! Music! Music is something that talks for me. When I can't talk, when I can't shout, music does it for me. I guess listening to music really helps me . . . I went to a concert and it was so good that I was feeling really energetic that day and the day after. And I still feel really energetic when I think about that.

Sandman also found great comfort in creating art:

They're having an exhibition, and I'm making some art for that. That's the way I can deal with my problems. I'm always busy right now. Always busy. . . . Art is beautiful, and it just calms you down.

This strategy was not new to Sandman:

Even in our country, we had to do the same thing. Right now, my friend Mohamed is doing graffiti without any money. And the only reason he's doing it, is he's enjoying it, and he can forget about the problems he has; like it never happened. . . . We went to do graffiti in our city, and we were talking. . . . We would forget everything. We would leave every bad thing behind and we would go for graffiti. It was some kind of art; it was fun; it was dangerous kinda, and we would forget; forget our problems.

Sandman also identified the healing experience of creativity in his brother's life:

[My brother] went to . . . welding class. He really, really loved welding class. . . . Whenever he came out of the welding class, he was always smiling. It's a tough job. Usually people don't smile when they come out of welding class, but [my brother] did because it was something that worked for him.

Like Sandman's brother, other youth showed interest in physically demanding but enjoyable activities.

For different reasons, several of the male participants in the study showed a high value for sports in general and soccer in particular. Marty found great enjoyment during a summer hiking trip organized by a settlement agency; Oscar referred to YG exercising after school. For Adnan, soccer was closely linked to his sense of identity: *"I was the best soccer player in that school. . . . Soccer is my life and I have been able to be a part of the Senior Boys [Community] Soccer team this year."* Sandman identified the grueling and often dangerous nature of bicycle polo as a way to fulfill his need for risk and help him overcome the thoughts that caused sleeplessness: *"It can be dangerous. And it's so fun. So fun. So hard and so tiring . . . that I can have a really good sleep at night. On Wednesdays, I'm sure about that; I always have a great sleep."*

As young adults, six of the eleven students in this study identified the activities that helped them cope with difficulties and live good lives. The activities ranged widely from walking in the serenity of nature to involvement in physically demanding, team sports. For Sandman, both types of activities met his needs depending on when he needed to be calmed or energized. Often, the youth participants showed that the choices they made were heavily influenced by a sense of social justice and deep religious beliefs.

7.2 Guiding Principles: Social Justice and Religion

Through the students' stories and interviews, I observed a passionate sense of social justice and firm dedication to a higher power, which acted as a protective factor for most students. Generally, "[t]hose that have strong ideologies seem to cope better" (McAdam-Crisp, 2006, p. 469). Pearl expressed her beliefs by taking the voice of the narrator in a children's

story: “*They were very friendly and sharing birds. When a group of birds found food they shared it with whole group of birds either it's enough for all of them or no.*” Sandman communicated his strong social stance as he recounted the historical hero figure who acted as a role model for a life of good deeds:

I love carvings on stone. It reminds me of Persepolis. . . . Even the Jewish people called him the Prophet because he saved them from Babylon . . . the Babylon king used to use Jewish people as slaves, so [Persepolis] conquered Babylon without killing too many people. Actually he killed just a couple of soldiers and that's it, and he freed all the Jewish people. . . . We love him so much that he's even kind of god for us, because he always talked about human rights and how everyone can be free, and he actually did that two thousand five hundred years ago. . . . Even the workers in Persepolis . . . used to get some kind of insurance. They were insured if something happened to them or they go out of a job, they will get paid. . . . I really love him. I really, truly love him. . . . The meaning of perfection is in that city.

Besides expressing strong beliefs about social justice and the need to do good deeds, these youth spoke about the protective factors of their respective faiths.

The students in the EAL program often joined conversations about religious beliefs and practices in general and occasionally on a very personal level. Some youths shared how their religious communities were targeted for persecution; other students reflected on the political ideologies of their home countries which jeopardizes people of minority faiths. The themes that arose from the narratives were: religion as identity, guidance or rules for life, and God as a benevolent protector.

Because religion played such a large role in Pearl's life and identity, wearing a hijab (a scarf) in school as a sign of religious affiliation was very important:

I'm wearing scarf. This is good because . . . if you see me first time, and I'm wearing scarf, then you must know this is Muslim girl. Like [another girl], she's not wearing scarf, and you will see her first time, you will not know if she's Muslim or no. . . . This is most important to wear proper dress and scarf, so other people know this is Muslim girl, and she's in her culture, and she's good. Other people feel good about that.

This connection between religion and identity was also recognized by Mr. Jack who saw the strength of girls who wear hijab in a school predominantly populated by Euro-Christians. He recognized the strong identity of youth who displayed their cultural affiliation outside of school: “[They’re] not shy about it; they take their faith seriously.”

References to God, as a guide, appeared throughout students’ writing. On the first occasions, Adnan wrote the following passage, “*Like God says do what ever you do and I’ll help you. Don’t ever give up.*” During a personal interview, Adnan expounded on religious teachings in the context of a young, Somali boy being shot as he was waiting for the bus: “*God says, no killing people. If you kill people you go Hell. God forgive if you do anything . . . but kill person, no. . . . Even Christians don’t have to kill people. It’s illegal.*”

God as a benevolent and powerful protector was the third theme that emerged in stories generated by YG and Loso. YG’s connection to religion was frequently referred to in his writing. Reflecting on the sponsorship of refugees to various places around the world, he wrote, “*Its [sic] amazing the God made the magic.*” In an essay regarding the important people in his life, he reflected, “*I was putting my god as first important.*” In the conclusion to the essay, YG

wished the best for his family: *“Thank god for bringing my beautiful parents and also my brothers and sisters. May god bless my dear parents and family.”*

For Loso, the role of religion in protecting and healing arose during a conversation in which he recounted the consequences of thinking about public executions in Saudi Arabia. He explained that the thoughts of people being beheaded kept him awake at night. On these occasions, Loso told his mother about the thoughts, and she advised him to wash and pray. After performing this ritual, Loso was able to sleep.

The student participants also demonstrated strong character traits that acted as a buffer to challenges and risks they faced. In particular, the student participants’ ability to stay hopeful and have a positive attitude was remarkable. Despite numerous challenges and barriers to economic, social, and educational success, the youth found positive aspects to life and showed a sense of humour

7.3 Learning from Adversity, Being Hopeful and Having a Sense of Humour

Resilient youth exhibit numerous personal characteristics and traits that serve as a buffer to the accumulation of risk (Ungar, 2001; 2008). In this study, youth demonstrated personal attributes in three areas: the ability to learn from adversity (McEwen, 2007), being hopeful and optimistic for the future (Seligman, 1995), and having a sense of humour (Cameron, et al., 2010). Many of the discussions arose because of the topics presented by the grade eleven English Language Arts (ELA 20) teacher.

During the ELA 20 class, Ms. O.S. offered the students many opportunities to reflect on the past, examine present situations, and move toward the future. As a result of these assignments, three of the students wrote about learning from difficult situations. Tim Tom recognized several positive changes in his life:

Living in [this city] was hard at first but after living here for a while my English got better and I was kind of getting used to the cold. Now I know lots of people and its essayer [sic] to learn English and to get around . . . I have changed my attitude towards school this semester. When I got kicked out I realized that I need school to get a good job or a good education. I started doing my homework and going to all of my classes.

Like Tim Tom, Marty was able to see the constructive end to challenging circumstances:

Moving to Canada really changed my life and made me to learn lots of things. I had never lived in foreign country before. Going to school in Canada helped me to improve my social skills. When I got to the school I didn't know anybody. I remember the first guy I talked to. We are still friends. Passing time and being alone made me to talk to some strange people. I started to talk to people in bus in the way home and also my classmates.

Adnan openly expressed his desire to make a positive change:

I will try my best Ms Geres. I'll try my best. . . . Don't ever give up. This is life. You're going to see a lot of things. . . . We want to live in peace. Everybody wants to live in peace . . . I know I lived in a bad life and good life but now I'm ready to make a better life.

The student participants demonstrate a sense of optimism. This was particularly poignant when the situation could have been viewed as negative, but the student participants were able to find a positive element in a difficult time. Pearl was very optimistic about her year at school:

I thought this is the best semester I am having ever. . . . My math class is good I didn't get in difficulties in this class. It is pretty straight forward. . . . My all classes were good . . . I tried my best.

Loso showed great appreciation for small pleasures as he reflected on the past year: *“My 2010 highlight was nice but not that nice. Nice [things] are I got a job. I get gift from my brother.”*

Akin to this, Halwa wrote in her journal for Mr. Jack’s class:

I enjoyed my weekend very much. It was awesome . . . I got nice phone I really like my phone. . . . My holiday was good I enjoyed [it]. I didn’t get any [gifts] but I sleep a lot. . . . So now I am happy to have this life what I want to say is thanks Canada and government help us to have this life.

Using his resourcefulness, Hamid turned an uneventful time into pleasure:

I didn’t really go out in that small town because there was almost no where to go, so this whole time I was just sitting in my uncle’s market and reading books. This book was so interesting that I would sit for hours and hours just trying to finish the book. It was a time of limitless reading.

Oscar, YG, and Adnan demonstrated a positive outlook and expectations for betterment in the future. Showing signs of hopefulness, Oscar contemplated that his circle of friends would increase with time: *“When I English better make a friend I will happy in school.”* YG speculated that as he matured, his life would be better: *“When I grow up . . . some things are more possible in my life.”* Much of what he hoped for was related to political freedom in his country of origin and improved living conditions in refugee camps: *“Some days when his people had freedom his house might pretty much more [than] that.”* Despite, his academic and financial challenges, Adnan had hope that in the future he could follow through with his dreams of altruism:

I want to make better life for my self and my family and help other people who can't work who don't have nothing to eat food or drink . . . the people don't have nothing and want to make a better life I want to say u [sic] have chance now to make a better life.

The third personal attribute to help youth deal with difficult situations is the use of humour. A student, who was well known in the EAL program for his sense of humour and ability to make a difficult situation into a belly laugh, was Hamid. The following excerpt is from his chronicled journey to Afghanistan where he encountered many cultural challenges and dangerous situations yet managed to look back with laughter and amusement. Using a picture from an internet-based photo sharing site, Hamid told the following story about being frightened in the early morning hours:



Figure 7.1. A cow. Retrieved from

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mattjiggins/3453849607/>

At three o'clock in the morning I walked to that small barn room thinking it was a washroom. When I entered there, it was dark and scary, and I also heard something moving and giving some scary noises. I walked to that noisy noise as it got louder and something ran quickly. I got scared and closed the door and ran back inside the house. The next day I told my cousins this story; everyone was laughing and told me . . . some of those cows were very afraid of humans. So it's not like they scared me; it was more like I scared them.

A second student who developed a reputation for his easy-going, fun-loving nature was Oscar. Despite his overwhelming sense of responsibility, the feeling that his life was over, and there was only hope for his future children, Oscar managed to look back on the happier times of his childhood. Oscar wrote and illustrated a children's story about his elementary school classmate hiding a stray cat in his desk. The following are two pages from his book:

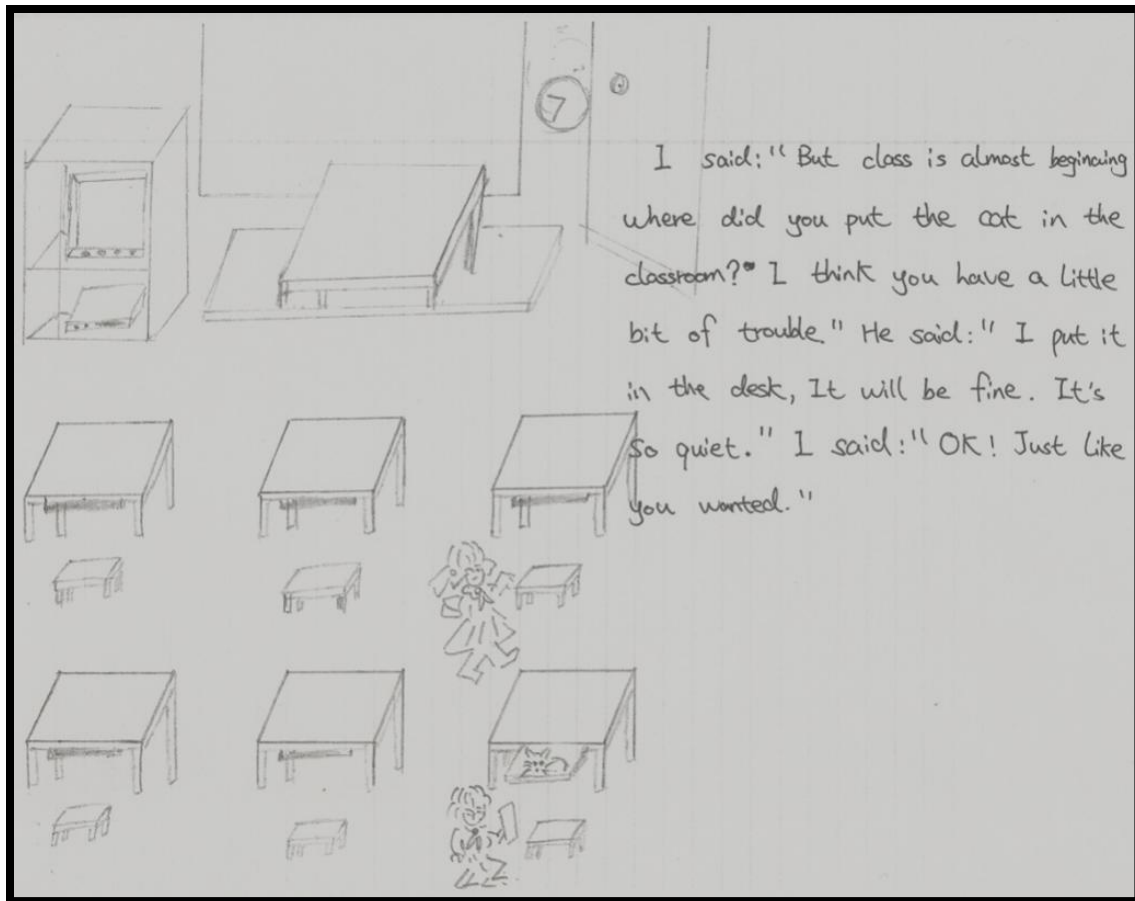


Figure 7.2. Hiding the cat in a desk.

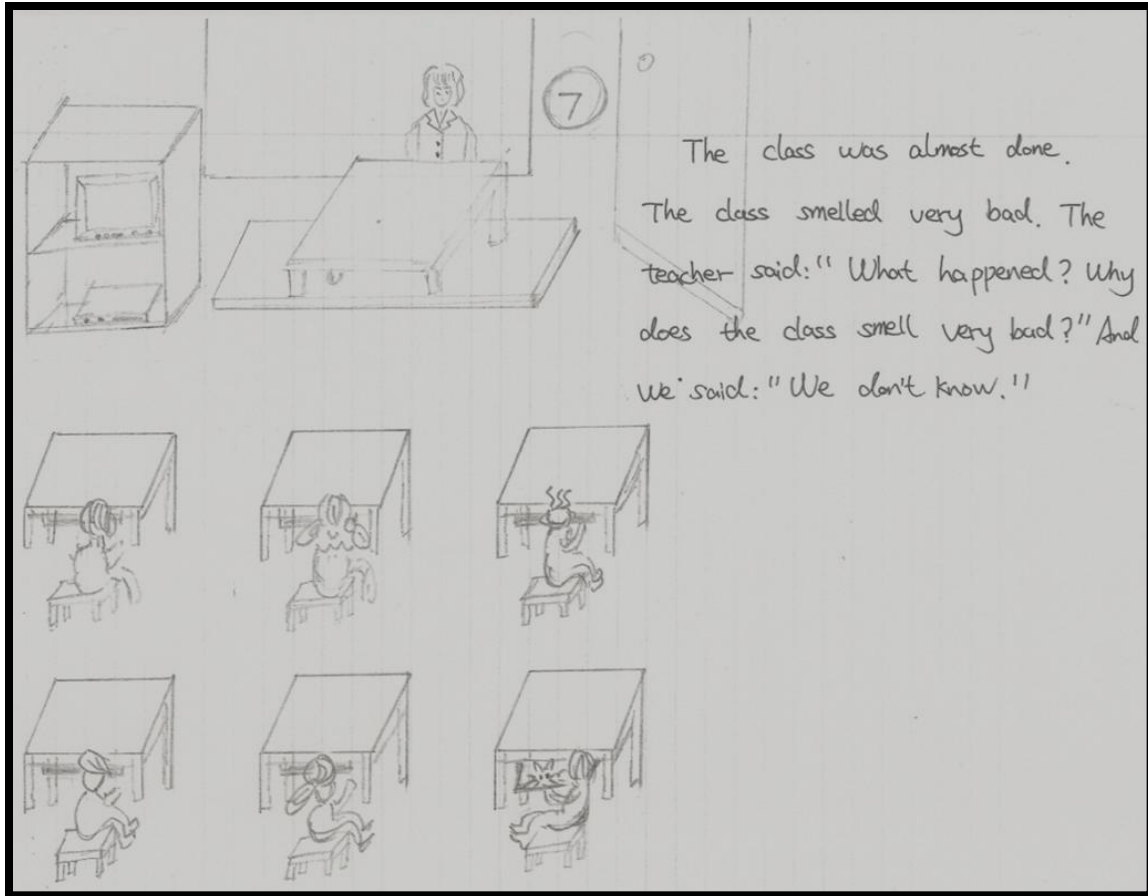


Figure 7.3. The teacher smells the cat.

With the pride of youthful power, Oscar explained how he and his friends deceived the teacher until the end of class when they sent the cat away undetected.

Two students who were identified by teachers as having a sense of humour, in addition to numerous resilient attributes, are Halwa and Adnan. Mr. Jack recognized Halwa's ability to use humour as a means of coping with difficult situations. The teacher recounted the following story of the strength of a student faced with immense hardship:

When [Halwa] started sharing about her relationship with her mom, her whole story, there's a lot of pain in it, and yet there's something very joyful in her, and she's got this whimsical sense of humour that I just love. She's always winking at you, [metaphorically] not physically, but just that smile on her face. In spite of all the pain and being in other

countries . . . there's a person who sees a lot of humour in her life. . . . She's a really neat kid, who in many ways sees the big picture of life. She's got tons of talent. She could do some really great things. She's got personality galore. That's going to take her many places.

In our post-class debriefings, Miss O. S. frequently talked about Adnan's positive attitude, joyful nature, and strength in facing academic and social challenges. An overarching theme of Adnan's interviews was the strategies he had developed to resist gang involvement and stay on a safe and honest path. Adnan spoke prolifically about the positive attitudes and relationships he had developed. His advice to newcomers was to maintain a strong sense of self and resist the allure of illicit activity:

People say, "Parties, oh yeah, hot chicks, just go." Yeah you have to think, this guy might be bad people. First if you want to know if this guy is bad you have to look how he acts [and]. . . who he's hanging out with. . . . Don't walk around and act like a dog. . . . You have to be a human being. You have a mind, you have to think about it, not just go anywhere. Like me, they ask, "Hey man, you smoke weed" I say, "No man, I don't smoke" Yeah, just two words, "I don't smoke" but if you have smoke and you give them, tomorrow they're going to come and ask, "We got weed, you want to join us? We're going to get high and stuff." You have to think first before you do something.

Underlying Adnan's words of wisdom is an understanding of the great struggles and challenges faced by his peers. Being empathetic enhances resilience (Ungar, 2008). But in addition, the ability to show empathy also benefits society (Rifkin, 2010). This is why the next section is devoted to this personal attribute.

7.4 Empathy

At the intersection of the social and the personal is the facility to have empathy. As communication patterns evolve, more diverse peoples come in contact with each other, thereby “extending the central nervous system of each individual and the society as a whole” (Rifkin, 2010, p. 17). Empathy and compassion contribute to the betterment of society, as people “transform compassion (a personal virtue) into heroic action (a civic virtue)” (Zimbardo, n.d., p. 1). Ungar (2008) categorizes the capacity to have empathy and understand others as a protective factor for youth. Students who show empathy, therefore, have characteristics of resilience that are beneficial to themselves and society in general.

The student participants showed empathy for people in different contexts: family, EAL classmates and other youth, and for citizens of the world. First, concern and understanding was shown for parents in their struggles to provide and nurture children under difficult circumstances. Pearl empathized with mothers who have the great responsibility to raise their daughters well in spite of many challenges presented in a culturally-different country. Oscar showed empathy as he reflected on the reciprocal nature of caring; grandparents nurture their grandchildren and in return, adult children support aging parents. November recognized his mother’s challenges to cope with six children: *“My mother fed and dressed us as well as she could.”* YG appreciated his parents’ struggles to provide the necessities of life in the refugee camp and later in Canada:

My mom usually was pretty busy too. My mom always had to wake up [early] in the morning to cook and feed food to my little brothers and sisters. Usually she had to change and dress us. Always I saw my mom real tired and sometimes she got sick too.

Adnan began his story of empathy by explaining to me how he helped support his mother in Saudi Arabia, so she would not have to beg from door to door. As his narrative moved to the present, the young man became filled with such emotion he was unable to speak:

Now I can help my friends and family when they are in need. . . . When I give my mom everything she needs, after that I'm going to start my life because mom, she's important. Mom is very important. So this is her time. If I get a lot of money I'm going to buy a house for my mom, I'll buy everything for her, anything. Like seriously Ms. Geres.

Hamid's empathy for his mother's loss of homeland was woven throughout the story of their visit to Afghanistan. He illustrated this portion of his story with a photo from an internet-based photo sharing site:

We finally came to Kandahar city. As we drew by it, I saw my mother being sad. I asked her why she was sad. She told me, "When I was a little girl, my dad and I were coming to visit this city. It was crowded with people; it was the most beautiful city in Afghanistan. The rides, shops, buildings were crowded with people. Every thing was beautiful. . . . Now I see only broken buildings, blown up hospitals and schools, and it was not as crowded as it used to be."



Figure 7.4. Returning to Kandahar. Retrieved from

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/78054797@N00/3310165314/>

I guess I would have felt the same if the place of my childhood looked so beautiful, and ended up looking as terrible as it does now. It would make any flower turn brown even at [the best] time of the year.

The second context in which students showed empathy was during discussion about their fellow EAL classmates. Reflecting on a school event, Loso said, *“I hope was nice for everyone.”* YG wrote about a classmate he had photographed on a school fieldtrip:

He doesn't have any friends and I think this is the truth because sometimes I see his walk alone and reading alone. I think his look like me when I came this school the first year. I don't have any friend too.

Last, the students' dimension of caring was shown to expand to youth in general, members of the larger community and finally to all citizens of the world. Marty displayed insight into a fictional character's conflict with a friend: "*Sometimes he said that he was embarrassed to be Rowley's friend because Rowley was acting like a small kid, but I think it wasn't the way he really thought.*" Tim Tom used the safety of a children's story to express his concern for youth who feel bullied:

Once upon a time there was a small dinosaur, he was very sad because he was not as tall as the other Dinosaurs. All other dinosaurs were mean to him and no one wanted to play with him or talk to him. Every day at school the other dinosaurs laughed at him and teased him.

Empathy for members of the larger community and citizens of the world was shown by Halwa and Sandman respectively. When a newcomer to Canada approached Halwa for financial help, her extended family pooled their meagre resources with a sense of duty to their community member. She wrote in her Computer Processing journal: "*I asked my brother in law he said we will help him we have to and we help him.*" Sandman took a philosophical standpoint and pondered the necessity of people living in harmony. He began with his thoughts about culturally different people in Saskatchewan:

They are human, and we are human, so we have to care about each other. There is a poem on the entrance of United Nations in Saudi. I don't know the complete translation in English, but what it says is humans are together, and they were made together. If

something, damages, attacks, injures that one together thing [then] the other part of that thing wouldn't stay silent or wouldn't tolerate injuries. So I guess we are just part of being human, I guess we have to know about each others' problems, and try to find some way to try to help each other. Caring is important I guess. That we care, that makes a difference.

The students' sense of empathy and caring radiated into their vocational and avocational endeavours, which is a great benefit to society because besides being a protective factor, empathy has become a highly valued attribute in the world of employment. Rifkin (2010) comments on empathy in this manner:

The new insights into human beings' empathic nature has [sic] even caught the attention of human resources management who are beginning to put as much emphasis on social intelligence as professional skills. The ability of employees to empathize across traditional ethnic, racial, cultural, and gender boundaries is increasingly regarded as essential to corporate performance. (p. 18)

The skills of which Rifkin (2010) writes are clearly shown by the student participants.

Sandman worked with homeless and addicted children in his country of origin and supported public campaigns to raise awareness of social problems, and in Saskatchewan he strove to create a welcoming atmosphere for racialized people. Halwa's volunteer work in her Saskatchewan community led her to think about future employment: *"I went to [the settlement agency] to help some new people came from Kenya I love helping people and I want be helper always. . . . That is why I want be social worker."* Adnan found lucrative summer employment and distributed most of his earnings between his mother and family members in drought-stricken Somalia.

The students' display of empathy is important on individual and societal levels. All the youth in this study faced the challenge of being relocated, and some youth faced life-threatening situations. The degree of empathy shown for family, friends, and citizens of the world leads me to believe that the youth were working to make meaning of difficult experiences (Frankl, 1992). Such individual growth benefits society because "greater insight into his/her life in the new country and how it was affected by the past . . . should lead to the ability to live more constructively" (Kristal-Andersson, 2001, p. 290). This is demonstrated in Adnan's statement: "*I don't care just about my family. I care about people who don't have nothing. I feel sorry for them. We used to live the same way. We don't have food.*" The youths in this study were able to persevere under very difficult circumstances, show empathy and compassion for others, and work toward social change.

To conclude, youth resilience was described and analysed in this chapter through the student participants' personal strategies and attributes for growing up well (Theron et al., 2011). Valued sources of wellbeing identified by students included connections to nature as a source of happiness; involvement in creative activities to provide relief from worries and concerns (Hickling, 2007); and participating in sports that increased a sense of accomplishment and served to regulate the inner-self (Perry, 2012). Guiding principles of social justice and religion helped these youths cope with change and uncertainty (McAdam-Crisp, 2006) by providing consistent rules and expectations and helped them deal with traumatic memories (Abi-Hashem, 2008). Being hopeful and having a positive attitude buffered the effects of risk (Ungar, 2008) by keeping them focused on positive goals and avoiding the lure of negative social influences. In personal reflections and classroom conversations, the students showed aspects of resilience by using humour to deal with difficult situations (Cameron et al., 2010). The last section of this

chapter draws attention to the youth who were able to find meaning in their difficult circumstances (Frankl, 1992), develop a strong sense of empathy and contemplate their role in making positive social change (Rifkin, 2009).

The importance of youths' capacity to see positive aspects in challenging times and educators' role in supporting students to be hopeful is presented by Horton (as cited in Starr, 2011). After many years of teaching youth in British Columbia, Horton reflects on the commonalities of people who have experienced forced migration:

The negatives include trauma, poverty, no initial point of connection to their new home and, for some, no previous experience of school. Ever. However, what they have in common is something so powerful it can overcome all the bad – and that's hope. They have tremendous hope, and our job is to help them realize it. (p. 53)

Considering both needs and strengths of youth who arrive as refugees and immigrants is pertinent to teachers who are often the first people to hear students' stories of hardship and trauma (B. Kristal-Anderson, personal communication, May 2, 2011). Understanding students' cultural beliefs and practices can help school staffs make appropriate decisions about what supports to pursue (Pipher, 2002). Listening to the voice of culturally-diverse youth avoids the oppressive stance underlying inquiries driven by an adult, white, middle-class perspective (Haas Dyson, 1994; Johnson et al., 2008; Kincheloe, 2007; Mitra, 2007).

7.5 Discussion

Identifying the strengths of youth who have experienced forced migration is important in providing a balanced and accurate portrayal of students' needs. I must point out that the relative nature of the findings does not reduce their meaning. "Relativism is not something to be transcended, it is merely something with which we, as finite beings, must learn to live" (Smith &

Deemer, 2000, p. 885). Although each student presents a unique narrative based on personality, experience, and culture, there are many factors that are common to youth across cultures. Youth who arrive as immigrants and refugees are faced with numerous educational, social, and psychological challenges in addition to the natural, biological emergence into adulthood, yet many are able to thrive (Berger, 2008). Understanding what youth need in order to thrive is relevant to school administrators, educators, and policy makers. Opinions are changing on how pertinent information about youth is gleaned.

The importance of including the perspective of youth with interrupted education is increasing with the awareness that despite limited first language education, such students have great insight into their own needs (Dudley-Grant & Etheridge, 2008; Hickling, 2007; Kirmayer, 2002; Weerackody & Fernando, 2009; Yunus, 2007). When consulted, youth are able to recognize people, spaces and activities that provide guidance, happiness, and comfort in difficult times (Coventry et al., 2003; Fine et al., 2007; Hébert, Wilkinson, & Mehrunissa, 2008). Adult allies also take notice of such youths' personal attributes, values and beliefs that help buffer risk and foster resilience (Carswell & Carswell, 2008; Feldmann et al. 2007; Theron et al, 2011). The findings of this study enhance our understanding of the needs as well as the strengths of youth who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration.

From the perspective of a teacher-researcher, certain findings of this qualitative study are particularly significant. In this project, students recognize Canadian teachers as allies and show an attachment to their Saskatchewan school. Although schools have traditionally focused on academic success, the voices of the youth participants reinforce the necessity to incorporate the emotional wellbeing of youth in all aspects of school (Barnard et al., 1999; Straker, 1996). Since students spend such a large part of their day at school, having a sense of safety and belonging is

extremely important particularly for youth who experienced traumatic events or used *not trusting* (Pipher, 2002) as a survival skill.

Positive peer support and a sense of belonging within the EAL program, the larger school, and community are factors that youth value highly. Since the 1930s, researchers have recognized belonging as a primary drive that is common across cultures (Rifkin, 2009). The culturally-diverse youth in this study demonstrated a great longing for acceptance and belonging in their Saskatchewan school and community. “The need to belong seems to hold true in a number of cultural contexts [and] this need provides a sense of support or enhanced community, which has been identified . . . as a protective factor” (McAdam-Crisp, 2006, p. 468). A sense of belonging and inclusion will encourage the development of a Canadian identity for newcomers, thus mitigating acts of violence when youth are assisted in converting bridging social capital into bonding social capital with mainstream society.

Religious beliefs, spirituality, and cultural practices play a large role in buffering the negative effects of migration (McAdam-Crisp, 2006). It is interesting that although unsolicited on this specific topic, the students’ stories nevertheless provide a glimpse into the role of religion as a factor of resilience. Religion provides a stabilizing force for newcomers in the face of adversity and change, and the maintenance of religious practices provides a constant in the midst of uncertainty. Donning religious attire makes a statement to outsiders regarding the religious pride of the wearer and helps support fragile identities that are challenged by cultural differences. Telling stories about historical leaders also enhances cultural identity and pride. Faith in God as a protector of people is a comfort in the face of poverty and struggles to acculturate. Religious beliefs and practices offer healing when troubling thoughts interfere with growing up well.

Students identified their families as being a significant protective factor. The youth participants' stories show that despite the challenges of living on or below the poverty line, many families have the skills to mitigate risk and raise resilient children (Arafat & Musleh, 2006; McCubbin et al., 2008; Moore as cited in Brendtro et al., 2009). The teacher participants in this study saw refugee and immigrant students as being family-orientated, appreciative of the sacrifices their parents made, and academically supported through family discussions and conversations about world events. The students demonstrated that a close family bond can develop following traumatic events resulting in reciprocal feelings of caring and empathy. The findings of this study led me to believe that immigrant and refugee youth who showed empathy turned a difficult situation into an opportunity for growth as they were able to build trusting relationships with teachers and EAL classmates. In particular, youth who had experienced violence and trauma showed perseverance and strength because a great deal of resilience is needed when trauma puts people in jeopardy (McAdam-Crisp, 2006).

The connection between overcoming adversity and personal growth is supported in Zimbardo's 2010 TED Talk (also see Zimbardo, n.d.) in which he hypothesizes that people, who have survived a personal trauma are three times more likely to become heroes and volunteers. Being mindful that anticipating growth can cause stress for youth (Berger, 2008), I would not generalize this expectation to immigrant and refugee youth in all situations. The concept of personal growth following great hardship, does however, highlight the strength of resilient youth who experienced forced migration and the valuable contributions they bring to Canadian society. At the school level, I believe it is important to provide opportunities for youth to reflect on their experiences of forced migration, to develop peer support networks, and to encourage students to see themselves as successful because of the challenges they have overcome. Since employers

are placing more emphasis on empathic employees, I see the benefits of public awareness campaigns regarding the valuable social capital newcomers bring to Canadian communities. In this way, public discourse could be influenced to move from instead seeing youth who have experienced forced migration and interrupted education from a deficit model, with a focus on what these students lack, to instead use an asset model with a focus on what they can contribute to society.

In conclusion, the accumulation of risk factors cannot be underestimated (Beiser et al., 2005; Garbarino & Kostelny, 1996; Green, 2007; Ngo, 2010; Robben, 2000), yet newcomer youth have strategies and personal qualities that help them overcome adversity (Ingleby & Watters, 2002; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Owen & English, 2005; Rousseau & Guzder, 2008). In spite of minimal literacy skills, these youth have insight and wisdom regarding what young people need in order to be successful academically, socially, and emotionally (Pekrul & Levin, 2007; Phan, 2002; Pike et al., 2008; Rudduck, 2007). There is a great deal to be learned to assist these youth successfully adjust to life in a country of resettlement. Rigorous, longitudinal examinations of refugee and immigrant experiences in Canada are needed to determine the “impact of protective factors on psychological adjustment over time, as well as to account for possible differences in the phases that may occur after resettlement” (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007, p. 39). The voices of youth who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration can contribute immense expertise to our understanding of the needs and strengths of youth new to Canada.

Chapter Eight

Concluding Thoughts on Factors of Risk and Resilience

During this six-year journey, I have gained greater insight and resources to address the question: What are the pre- and post-migration factors that place newcomer youth at risk of early school leaving and involvement in illicit activity, and what are the factors that support youth to be resilient in the face of challenges? The answer is not simple and straightforward but rather complex and multifaceted, because youth new to Canada face “diverse linguistic, acculturative, psychological and socioeconomic challenges in their daily lives” (Van Ngo & Schleifer, 2005). This study has provided deeper insight into the risk factors that negatively affect newcomer youths’ capacity to be successful in school. Based on the participants’ narratives, I have also identified the personal supports, attributes and strategies that enhance resilience and assist youth to overcome pre- and post-migration obstacles. Previous research highlights the need to explore how the various components of culture interrelate with historical, political, social, and economic factors to influence newcomers’ mental health (Madianos, 2010). The findings of this study assist in filling that gap. In this final chapter, I provide my concluding thoughts on what I learned from the voices of youth who experienced interrupted education and forced migration, and I reflect on the significance of this study within the literature, field and theory.

I begin with the underpinning of my anti-oppressive research design, which is a multi-method approach to action inquiry and the negative and positive aspects of this choice. In the next section, I outline my understanding of what youth need to be supported emotionally, socially, and academically; I propose ways storytelling can be implemented in this process. As a

component of the story collection process, I explore how storytelling can be the foundation for literacy curricula and school-based strategies to support newcomer youths' wellbeing. This leads to my final thoughts on research for social change and recommendations for policy amendment at the federal, provincial, university, and school division levels.

8.1 Reflections on Action Research and a Multi-Method Approach

Action research is very appropriate for school-based inquiries because it mirrors teachers' everyday process of reflection. Whether teachers engage in formal or informal research, they continually assess and reflect on individual student performances, group dynamics and their own effectiveness based on classroom observations, discussions with students, students' work, and conversations with other teachers. Researchers who participate in action research gather information on the lived experiences of students and teachers in a real-life situation; the findings are relevant to the participants. This is less the case in school studies using quantitative, objective data collection instruments (Balzer, 2006).

Because of the diverse educational and immigration experiences of the student participants, using a multi-method approach to conduct action research was suitable for this qualitative, action research study. The methods included classroom observations, in-class oral storytelling, students' submissions of written stories, and personal interviews with students and teachers. As I observed these youth in their secondary English class, I strove to create as little change as possible and provide meaningful reasons for the students to practice their English skills. This "ethic of care" (Prosser, 2011) approach led me to make decisions and act in ways that could potentially benefit an individual student or group of students. I believe I was successful because the majority of the students spoke freely and wrote very personal stories

which reflect that a certain degree of trust had been established between them, their teacher and with me, the researcher.

In-class oral and written storytelling as well as photo essays or Photovoice played a crucial role in the implementation of this study. As a research tool, storytelling provided a familiar and culturally appropriate way for a diverse group of students to talk about their past experiences, their present situations, and dreams for the future (Beah, 2007; Rogoff, 2003). Using a combination of writing and speaking opportunities as well as group and personal formats gave youth choices for participation. This was particularly important since the students had vastly different first language education experiences and reasons for migration. Students used photos to support their ideas or express complex concepts that required a more advanced level of English proficiency.

A complication that hindered the success of Photovoice was the students' use of internet-based photos. Due to copyright restrictions, the photos were not available for inclusion in this dissertation. I fear my written description of the chosen photos did not capture the subtle nuances of the images. More importantly, the use of existing photos moves away from the essence of the Photovoice model which encourages participants to photograph aspects of their lives as an act of social justice for people who are generally researched *on* rather than researched *with*. While my intentions were true to Photovoice, the method was not. Rather, the method straddled the boundaries between Photovoice and photo elicitation.

The students' use of internet-based images is similar to photo elicitation where participants are provided an artifact to encourage remembering, to lessen the pressure of discussing sensitive topics, and to even the power differential between researcher and participant (Prosser, 2011). The difference between this strategy and my research procedure is that I did not

choose the photo; the students found the most suitable images to express their stories. In my opinion, the students' sense of agency in the process was crucial. As Prosser (2011) warns, a researcher's inappropriate choice of imagery can be unsettling or even harmful for participants. Putting student participants in a difficult position is in opposition to my research goals and an issue of which I am very cognizant. My determination to honour participants' choices was brought to the fore as students submitted their personal photos.

Since the goal of using Photovoice is to provide opportunities for people to express the social justice issues most relevant to them, I had hoped the youth would photograph aspects of their personal lives that were expressed in their writing assignments or during class discussions. A particular issue was the great need for safe, affordable, and well-maintained housing. Although YG's family moved to Alberta in search of employment and a home for their large, multi-generation family, his photo showed only the outside of a Saskatchewan apartment building. This was much less potent than the image I was left with after visiting the family.

Because of a recent infestation of bedbugs, the family had disposed of all their living room furniture leaving only the metal frame of a bunk bed in the room. We sat on the floor where the chemical smell was overpowering, and I wondered how the family could eat, sleep and play in such conditions. Similarly, Adnan's images did not capture the desperate need for housing expressed to me by his mother.

During a home visit to obtain parental consent, Adnan and Loso's mother beseeched me to help their family find better housing. Not only were they challenged by having five teenagers and an adult in a three-bedroom apartment, the condition of the building had deteriorated over the winter. Adnan's mother pulled back the curtain to show me that under a leaky window, the drywall had completely disintegrated exposing soggy insulation and a gaping hole to the outside

wall. This image was not part of Loso or Adnan's photo essay despite Adnan's frequently-expressed dream to buy his mother a home. There are several possible explanations why the students did not choose to include photos of their living environment.

One explanation might be that students did not see a teacher or a researcher as a resource to meet their need for better housing. Perhaps the students felt uncomfortable sharing their situations with classmates, and perhaps they did not see the assignment as an appropriate place to raise social justice issues. How we "see" is mediated by culture (Prosser, 2011), so I cannot use my white, middle-class lens to negatively evaluate what newcomer youth, from vastly different backgrounds, chose to highlight. Without an extended period of time to discuss these issues with the student participants, I am left with many unanswered questions. The structure of the institutional setting took precedence over the research study, the time of contact with the students, the topics for discussion, the need to meet curricular objectives, and the students enrolled in the class. It is interesting to ponder how a similar project in a social setting outside of school might generate different student-centred topics. For this study, the students' choice of images was far different from what I would have chosen, but I respect their choices. Using a multi-method approach provided other options for students to express personal opinions and reflections.

Writing stories provided opportunities for youth to share aspects of their lives they preferred not to share verbally. Personal interviews supplemented classroom observations and added occasions for those with limited literacy skills to express their needs or share experiences. Since oral storytelling is a highly valued cultural practice for several of the students, this format provided an atmosphere in which to excel. For students who avoided a one-on-one situation, the option of declining an interview was created to reduce student anxiety. Remarkably, the teacher-

orchestrated, in-class, peer interviews generated relevant information that the students had not shared in writing exercises or personal interviews with me.

The flexibility of an action research approach allowed the addition of student and teacher participants as the project evolved organically. This was a great benefit because the two student referrals and one volunteer added a richness I had not expected. Daily debriefings with the classroom teacher developed into a natural pattern and gave me an opportunity to reflect. This was particularly helpful since the unique interdisciplinary focus of this project resulted in much of my graduate work being conducted in isolation. Interviews with three teachers were included as teachers in the school spoke to me about the project. The teachers' comments added a new perspective since they used storytelling with youth in regular English Language Arts classes, higher level EAL classes, and Computer Processing classes.

A limitation on this action research was the restriction of time. We were constrained by a one-hour class period and the necessity for students to leave promptly and go to the next class. On several occasions, I had to abruptly end personal interviews with the realization that class had ended. Since it took several students 10 or 15 minutes to feel comfortable and find a topic of interest, it was very disappointing for me to stop a student in mid-sentence. We were also constrained by a five-month semester format which did not guarantee that the students would be together as a group for the following school term. This was unfortunate because the teacher and students had developed a comfortable atmosphere of trust and sharing that progressed with each class period.

Overall, I was very satisfied with the narrative collection process. Although the resulting number of stories was immense and the themes were occasionally difficult to interpret, the positive nature of the subject matter being developed by the youth participants outweighed the

negative aspects. With the exception of Sandman's work entitled *Immortal Soldier*, the students began their writing pieces with a topic presented by their teachers. The students did, however, take the story in whatever direction they wished. This was extremely important to me as I strove to avoid an *adultcentric* perspective (Ungar, 2001) that silences the voice of youth. My goal was to open a conversation that included many voices and perspectives rather than perpetuating a middle-class agenda under the guise of "colourblindness" (Wise, 2010) and the denial of white privilege. Storytelling as part of a multi-method, school-based action research study can work against youth oppression and toward resilience.

When students remain in control over the decision to share their stories, there are several benefits. Students can develop a sense of competence and belonging and reduce feelings of marginalization (Suárez-Orozco, 2000; Tabar, 2007). Retelling narratives helps these youths with their struggle to maintain a sense of cultural pride (Cornell & Hartman, 2007). Sharing through stories creates a safe environment that is conducive to building trust and the expression and validation of trauma (Williams et al., 2003; Rousseau et al., 2005). Considering that trauma affects the part of the brain that is responsible for primitive behaviours and instincts, before students can learn effectively, they must have the opportunities to heal trauma and build trust (Perry, 2012). School is the ideal place for youth to participate in narrative-centered activities that promote wellbeing.

The findings of this project contribute to theories of school-based programs that support youth emotionally as well as academically. Implementing school programs to increase students' resilience is very effective (Pike et al., 2008). The familiar nature and networks of schools make school-based interventions preferable (Arroyo & Eth, 1996). Machel (2001) recommends school-based programs that help children and youth understand how their war-related

experiences continue to affect their lives long after the fighting has stopped. Barnard et al. (1999) propose an educational approach to build resilience by working with small groups of children and youth in a normal setting, listening uncritically and respectfully, incorporating narrative and storytelling methods, and including support from family and peers while minimizing support from professionals. Recovery can take place if schools focus on the social processes and people's inner resources and use words such as “networking, empowerment, and activism rather than rehabilitation and cure” (Straker, 1996, p. 27).

Many aspects of these educational approaches were evident in the atmosphere and activities of the sheltered English Language Arts classroom in which the study was conducted. With the support of their empathetic teacher and peers, the students created narratives that reflect the personal and social qualities that support their resilience. In my opinion, the most important aspect of this study is that a multi-method approach facilitated students’ control of their own stories which met my goal to use an anti-oppressive research strategy. The narratives served to answer the question of what youth need when they come to Canada. The next section is my reflections on what the students identified as their emotional, social, and academic needs.

8.2 Meeting Youth’s Emotional Needs

I believe that newcomer youth want adult allies who care. If parents and family members are overwhelmed with their own challenges and unable to provide the emotional support youth seek, a caring adult ally is of particular significance. The importance of sharing life events is evident in the narratives of youth in this study who were eager to tell their personal stories of challenge and joy in the context of a trusting relationship.

The youth in this study demonstrated that they need trusted persons to listen non-judgmentally to their stories of pre-migration hardship and trauma. Such significant negative

factors continue to influence immigrant and refugee youth long after they have settled in Canada (Starr, 2011). Simply being in a safe place does not eradicate the fear, mistrust, and overwhelming sense of doom caused by previous experiences of danger. Understanding the past situations of youth new to Canada can help teachers make more accurate assessments of students' learning progress. Outward appearances do not provide an adequate indication of the effects of trauma, and as a result, teachers and adults who work closely with such youth may misinterpret the students' behaviours as disrespect, disengagement, or difficulty learning (Collier, 2004).

Because attributes of resilience are culture and context specific (Ungar, 2008), young people's strategies to overcome tremendous obstacles may not be recognized as positive factors in Canadian society. For example, Adnan's participation in illicit activity in his country of origin is not socially acceptable by Canadian standards, but his activities contributed to meeting the basic needs of his family. Recognizing youth as survivors removes the stigma associated with previous illicit activity and helps youth move into mainstream society without labels of dysfunction (Mullaly, 2007). Recognition and celebration of youths' progress is needed at the school and community levels.

Newcomer youth need increased opportunities to be involved in activities that enhance emotional wellbeing because if they cannot find appropriate ways to release stress, they are in jeopardy of becoming involved in high-risk activities such as drug and alcohol use (Beiser, 1999). Healthy, socially acceptable activities can either calm youth or provide the physically demanding outlet that most young people need. These activities include sport, art, drumming, and dance, among others. Since involvement in school sports is restricted by ability or after-

school employment, there is a great need for the development of community activities to provide all youth opportunities for involvement.

Dr. Bruce Perry's research regarding trauma and the brain opens many fascinating possibilities for work with youth. Through the use of advanced technology, Perry (2012) has put a scientific stamp on traditional methods of healing that have been practiced across cultures for centuries. The rhythmic and repetitive nature of drumming and dance have been shown to produce healing in the brainstem helping youth to self-regulate and move to higher order thinking. Perry's (2012) work fulfills a recommendation by Wilson (2008) who observed that modern science has generated an impressive body of knowledge regarding the negative effects of trauma but lacks carefully developed cross-cultural studies of healing and adaptation. The voice of youth in this study offer many recommendations for creating a healing atmosphere at the school and community levels.

8.3 Meeting Youth's Social Needs

Most youth need communities that are willing to make changes. Preparedness is necessary to counteract the lack of trust and the deficit in social capital that arises in "communities – cities, provinces, countries – that experience a sudden change [in immigration] in a short period of time" (Kazemipur, 2009, p. 130). When emotional risk factors, such as trauma, "are compounded by perceived attitudes of racism [then] students' confidence and concept of self are severely challenged and the stage is set for feelings of rejection, inadequacy, frustration and dropout" (Kanu, 2009, p. 117). Enhanced understanding of the needs and skills of newcomers is required for all people in order that immigrants and refugees can successfully integrate as citizens of Canada.

Newcomer youth and their families need access to affordable, safe, and adequate housing

because the stress of living in substandard housing amplifies the accumulation of risk. Frequent family relocations in search of appropriate housing are counter productive to successful settlement and integration (Farrell, 2005). Social programs to increase the availability to clean, reasonably-priced, and spacious housing, can assist youth and their families concentrate on language learning, employment, and positive social activities that enhance wellbeing.

Newcomer youth need to have less emotional and financial responsibility for their parents. By providing additional opportunities for parents to be employed, youth could be relieved of financial burdens (Coventry et al., 2003). This would allow them more time to address their academic needs, become involved in extracurricular activities to enhance their social and emotional wellbeing, and make friends both inside and outside of their cultural groups.

Providing additional support for families in everyday tasks and appointments as well as government applications for health benefits, legal documentation, and citizenship, to name a few examples, would relieve youth of involvement in activities beyond their emotional maturity. Parental authority is usurped when youth take on adult roles and responsibilities. This is crucial because the family provides a great deal of support and guidance as youth make many difficult transitions during the combined processes of adolescent maturation and migration. Maintaining the integrity of the family union and structure positively affects the adjustment of youth.

Newcomer youth need Canadians to understand that pre- and post-migration social challenges place them at risk for early school leaving and involvement in illicit activity. Acknowledging the numerous factors that put youth at risk reframes the issues as a shared responsibility rather than placing all the accountability for change on individual youth. A close inspection of social policies and structural deficiencies in our society is needed at all levels of

government (Ungar, 2008). Creating community education programs that increase awareness of the issues of immigrants and refugees can help reduce prejudice, xenophobia, racism, and marginalization (Berger, 2008).

Immigrant and refugee youth need to be recognized for their capacity to find positive strategies to meet migration challenges, the ability to identify the people, places, and activities that support successful integration, and the personal qualities and attributes to cope with adversity. Focusing on the positive attributes of newcomer youth changes stereotypes and breaks down barriers that isolate and alienate them. With the understanding that resilience is a combination of personal attributes, social, and ecological factors, it is necessary to look beyond the deficits of *at risk* youth and their families (Macedo, 2001; McLean Taylor et al., 1995; Mullaly, 2007).

These youth need to be acknowledged for their wisdom and ability to assess their own situations. In particular, those with limited first language education can greatly contribute to public discourse regarding what they require to live well but also on what they can contribute to society. Consulting these youth about the areas most important in their lives can help schools and communities develop appropriate, youth-centered programs and make a significant contribution to the development of resilient youth. As well, young people have the insight to make contributions to research, so teaching them how to be action researchers is beneficial to youth, school administrators, and academics (Fine et al., 2007).

Youth need supportive friendships. Although friendships cannot be mandated, the development of programs and activities which bring refugee, immigrant, First Nations, and Canadian-born youth together to share stories and learn about their commonalities can provide a milieu of possibility. Kristal-Andersson (2001) concludes that community-based programs,

which build on newcomers' individual strengths while focusing on the similarities between people, have the potential to prevent and counteract discrimination, racism, and prejudice. In addition, developing healthy, supportive relationships supports resilience and reduces the lure of involvement in anti-social groups (Bruner, 1996; Chettleburgh, 2007). As Kazemipur (2004) theorizes, bonding social capital is needed on a national level to improve the inclusion of newcomers to Canada. The entire population must be guided in developing cultural awareness and encouraged to create welcoming communities (Dietrich, 2009).

8.4 Meeting Youth's Educational Needs

Students need to be recognized for the educational, social, and emotional challenges they have faced and the progress they have made. Accomplishments for youth who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration must be measured according to the social and academic level at which each individual student began rather than normative referencing with Canadian-born youth. Erroneous perceptions could be mitigated by the implementation of anti-racist curricula in Saskatchewan to challenge existing theories held by many teachers and Canadian-born students that equality means *sameness*, with the mistaken assumption that everyone in Canada has an equal opportunity for success (Balzer, 2006). Many schools use slogans to portray a commitment to inclusiveness, yet curricula, interaction patterns, and assessment have changed very little (Kanu, 2009). It is imperative that educators understand that adapting lessons and exams to meet youths' developing language and literacy needs is an equalizing factor rather than an unfair advantage for newcomers.

Youth need the best possible educational environment in which to learn. Creating appropriate educational programs for students with high academic needs is challenging in a province such as Saskatchewan where the infrastructure is currently being developed to

accommodate the rapidly increasing immigrant population (Wang, 2012). In schools without specific programs for youth with undeveloped first language literacy skills, alternative but less appropriate placements are found. When students who are well educated and extremely well versed in the use of technology are placed with others who struggle with basic learning procedures such as sitting in a desk and using textbooks, the needs of students at both ends of the language-learning spectrum cannot be adequately addressed. Even if the students have similar abilities in oral English, academic writing skills can vary greatly which requires vastly different teaching methods to move each student to the next level (Freeman et al., 2002). Small class sizes are particularly important for youth with exceptionally high academic needs (Starr, 2010). The cost of assisting students is worthwhile because investing in the education of youth is analogous to building the infrastructure of a community (Yunus, 2007).

Youth need recognition and support for their desire to remain in school even if they are unable to verbalize their commitment. Building attachment to spaces is important to young newcomers as they develop a sense of self in a diverse community (Hébert & Lee, 2009). Students who are less verbal because of undeveloped literacy skills, a tenuous sense of trust, or more complicated issues of emotional wellbeing confirm their attachment to school by improving school attendance, sharing personal stories with adult allies and fellow students, and remaining enrolled at the school despite the family's relocation. Celebrating these accomplishments and successes are vital to keeping youth in school (Zwarych, 2004).

Newcomer youth need teachers trained to recognize that migration causes emotional barriers to school success. Teachers generally have the most contact with youth outside of their family, and by their professional training, they are more likely to recognize young people who are struggling (Wilson, 2011). This is important because early intervention can prevent

psychological problems from developing later in life (Kristal-Andersson, 2001; Morland, 1999). As students move into the academic realm, however, they often come into contact with teachers who have limited pre-service training to manage the immediate challenges of a culturally heterogeneous group of students with multi-dimensional educational, emotional, and familial needs (Barnard et al., 1999; Flaitz, 2006). When teachers with little diversity training are put in contact with immigrant and refugee children who arrive without the educational skills teachers expect, problems arise, and adjusting students may be seen as failing (Freeman et al., 2002; Westermeyer & Wahmanholm, 1996). As a result, students' struggles with adjustment are mistakenly diagnosed as learning disabilities (Collier, 2001; Klinger, 2010; Levine & Kline, 2006).

The benefits of training teachers to support and accompany students are numerous (Wilson, 2011). Teacher-student relationships developed in a space that promotes the acquisition of knowledge, the negotiation of identities, and the creation of power “constitute the most immediate determinant of student academic success or failure” (Cummins, Early, & Stille, 2011, p. 25). Unlike counsellors of the Western world who must maintain a professional distance from clients, teachers concerned about creating a milieu of wellbeing can develop more personal relationships with youth. This is significant because reciprocal trust must be developed before mentors can assist newcomers in moving forward in their lives (Logger & Enrum, 2006). The teachers and youth participants in this study reflect the theories of Watson (2003): building trust needs to be at the heart of teaching as educators spend non-stressful time with students, make home visits, and openly show caring, concern, and affection for youth.

This theory is echoed by elementary principal and author David Starr. Starr (2011) succinctly places emphasis on “having the right staff in the right placements [because] it isn't

just about the number of teachers in a school, but who they are: their skill set and their attitudes” (p. 73). Supporting all teachers to develop appropriate skills for work with immigrant and refugee students is vital. Professional development and training to help teachers understand the needs of youth who arrive with experiences of interrupted education and forced migration can help reduce students’ frustration and increase motivation to learn. Teachers who make positive connections with such students assist them to reach their highest level of achievement (Dufour & Eaker, 1998).

In a milieu of caring, youth need access to teachers who are emotionally supported to deal with the taxing work of assisting students with high academic, social, and emotional needs (Muhammad, 2009). Often youth are able to share concerns and challenges with their teachers in lieu of attending formal counselling sessions. The following anecdote describes such a scenario.

As violence erupts in a student’s former country of refuge, and he subsequently loses contact with his friends, the student begins to have trouble concentrating in school. When it appears he will not pass his year-end exams, a teacher refers him to a school counsellor. The student, however, assures the counsellor that everything is fine. Instead he stays in his EAL class after school sometimes drumming softly as he stares into space, some days chatting about his youth in a war-torn country, and other times silently rocking in a chair beside the teacher’s desk. As a result of such situations, teachers take on “complex roles and responsibilities . . . as makeshift psychological counsellors, social workers, mentors, and refugee service providers” (Kanu, 2009, p. 117). This blurred line between professions creates challenges for teachers having a great capacity for empathy and concern for humanity (Freire, 2001) who may end up absorbing some of this emotional load.

Typically, teachers do not have the training to work with immigrant and refugee youth who have experienced trauma without putting their own health at risk (Rousseau & Guzder, 2008). Emotionally healthy teachers are imperative because a positive school atmosphere combined with adult allies who address the concerns of youth are essential protective factors in building resilience and reducing risk (Muhammad, 2009; Seligman, 1995; Silver Springs, 2005). In order to maintain a positive outlook and sense of hope when working with youth with high academic, emotional and social needs, teachers need ongoing training, professional guidance and their own system of support. The school community needs “educators who believe in the possibility of a better future – and in themselves” (Dufour & Eaker, 1998, p. 285). Each new wave of immigration requires knowledge of new cultures and political situations. Without cross-cultural training and awareness, well-meaning professionals can inadvertently traverse boundaries or become frustrated with cultural practices they misunderstand (Pipher, 2002).

As well, newcomer youth need protected places to explore their cultural identity and develop pride in their heritage while learning about First Nations and Canadian cultures. In this study, the youths’ stories related to staying connected to the past demonstrate a powerful message relevant to teaching culturally-diverse students, a message that reinforces the dramatic and positive changes in theories related to culture, learning, and wellbeing.

There have been great improvements in language-learning theories in the twenty years since I began my EAL teaching career; when I started, I witnessed a teacher rub a chalk eraser over an adult student’s forehead to symbolize that he must forget his language and use English. This is a fraction of what was experienced by the First Nations people of Canada and colonized people around the world who were forced to abandon or hide their culture. Many years later, the debate continues around discarding cultures as a means of adaptation (Galler & Sher, 2010;

James, 2001). My experience leads me to believe that it is essential to assist newcomer youth stay attached to their first language, culture, and family members.

The stories presented by the students in this study helped me understand that staying attached to non-migrating family members, stories of the past, and cultural practices play a crucial role in the wellbeing of young people. Being culturally grounded contributes to their resilience (Bemak & Cheung, 2004; Carswell & Carswell, 2008; Weerackody & Fernando, 2009). Communities, therefore, can enhance this protective factor by promoting the maintenance of culture and providing spaces for youth to engage in various forms of narrative expression.

Schools also play an important role in helping youth adapt to Canadian culture and the many changes in gender identities. Cultural differences in establishing male-female relationships are primary issues that students want to explore and discuss with a teacher or adult ally. For female students, differences in culturally appropriate clothing are particularly cogent to finding balance between the expectations at home and school. Youths also struggle with cultural differences in traditional gender roles. Young women gain more power and independence as they acquire education and move into the workforce, yet the change in power relations can create dissonance within the family. Female and male youth need safe places to explore their changing gender identities in a new country and trusted adults to provide guidance should the cultural clashes cause them to feel unsafe.

In sum, the academic and emotional needs of youth new to Canada intersect the social realm on many levels: family, peers, teachers, and the community. Because of this, it is imperative to raise awareness among all people touched by the lives of youth who experienced interrupted education and forced migration. As demonstrated in this study, the narratives of such youths are vital to increased public education regarding risk and resilience. The findings of this

study contribute to filling a gap in research regarding how newcomer youth fare in school by registering their “views, feelings, and sentiments about their learning opportunities, in order to identify the reasons why visible-minority youth, in particular, often show poor academic performance or drop out of school” (Anisef et al., 2007, p. 5). Without concern for the whole child, interventions become superficial and meaningless because there is far more to language learning than learning the language. The impact of the findings and the literature leads me to make recommendations for policy change at the federal, provincial, university and school division levels.

8.5 Research for Social Change: Policy recommendations

As an action researcher my goal goes beyond gathering the storied experiences and opinions of marginalized youth and moves toward the use of this information to make policy recommendations that can buffer risk, support resilience and contribute to social change. Ultimately, “action research aims to solve pertinent problems in given contexts through democratic inquiry in which professional researchers collaborate with local stakeholders to seek and enact solutions to problems of major importance to stakeholders” (Greenwood & Levin, 2000, p. 96). Unfortunately, the student-participants have not been part of this process due to time restrictions and relocation. As an ally, however, it is not only my goal but my duty to proceed with recommendations for policy change that would recognize the challenges faced by EAL students and all marginalized youth while focusing on the factors that enhance the strength of young people. As a result of effective policy changes, individuals, schools and communities benefit because:

Attention to human capabilities and adaptive systems that promote healthy development and functioning have the potential to inform policy and programs that foster competence

and human capital and aim to improve the health of communities and nations while also preventing problems. (Masten, 2001, p. 235)

It is with this advice, I present my recommendations for policy change at the federal, provincial, university, and school division levels based on the literature and my research findings. For the sake of brevity, I have not reiterated the findings of this study. Instead, I have made reference to the previous sections where readers can find the students' and teachers' narratives that relate to each recommendation.

8.5.1 Federal Policy

a) Elimination of the refugee travel loan

Elimination of the refugee travel loan would greatly reduce the risk factors of refugee youth who often become responsible for finding employment to repay this debt (See Adnan's story in section 3.3.1). As a result, youth with little or no first language education are put at further risk because employment takes them away from the studies so desperately needed for successful integration into society. The burden of the travel loan puts refugee youth at risk of early school leaving and a life of poverty in low-paying jobs. Under such restricted budgets, individuals are advised by federal officials to make payments of at least \$20 per month. A study into the fiscal feasibility of such an approach is warranted. Perhaps it is more costly to administer this repayment program rather than forgive the loan.

b) Change policies that separate families

Federal policy change is required to keep migrant families together: (a) allow mothers to sponsor their children earlier; (b) allow the sponsorship of grandparents who acted as surrogate parents; (c) better inform refugee women of the need to report pregnancies that occur after the application process to migrate (See section 4.2.2 for stories of separated families). Family

support is crucial to the wellbeing and successful integration of youth. Every effort must be made to keep families together.

8.5.2 Provincial Policy

a) Enhance language assessment

The current framework for the language assessment of school-aged newcomers could be greatly enhanced by the addition of in-depth, personal interviews that gather the stories of each student's life. Detailed information regarding the previous school experiences of newcomers is critical for proper school placement of students. When a student says she/he has completed grade eight, a teacher needs to know what subjects were taught, what the school looked like, and how the lessons were presented (see Loso's story in section 3.3.2). Teachers must know if the student has had access to technology. There are great differences in the academic needs of youth who have gone to a school equipped with up-to-date technology and those who have studied computer-programming without ever touching a computer. In-depth interviews with newcomers are necessary to provide this crucial information.

b) Abandon the move toward standardized testing

Standardized testing must be avoided because it serves to stratify society. Standardized testing will have a detrimental effect on EAL youth with undeveloped English skills as well as students marginalized by poverty and the paucity of the Euro-Canadian, white, middle-class cultural and human capital on which the tests are based (see Marty's story section 4.1.1). Instead of standardizing tests, provincial officials can more positively affect multi-cultural minority students' successful school completion by funding programs and materials that would result in

equal outcomes. This includes increased programming for youth who have undeveloped first language literacy skills as well as creating alternate pathways to graduating.

c) Increase funding for literacy learners

There is a great need to increase funding and programming for older youth who have little or no first language education (see section 4.1.1 for literature related to importance of English competence). The academic needs of youth, in this situation, require a program that is slow-paced and student-directed with a low student-teacher ratio. Perhaps students over the typical graduation age of 18 would be better served in an adult educational facility, which would remove the pressure and often the humiliation of trying to compete academically with much younger classmates. In particular, specific programs and considerations are needed for school-aged, single mothers who experience oppression of poverty, gender and race. Government funds are well-spent when mothers and children benefit from the same program.

d) Develop curriculum around cross-cultural understanding

Revising the current Saskatchewan social studies and history curricula to include a focus on relationship-building among First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students, Canadian-born students and newcomer youth would greatly serve to promote discussion around racism, multiculturalism, and the resilience of marginalized people. Providing opportunities to meet and share stories is a powerful method of learning that also serves to break down barriers of cultural misunderstanding (See Chapter 5 for emotional risk factors). Putting a human face on historical and current political issues will engage youth and make learning more relevant. Social change begins with individuals; programs based on personal contact made through shared activities and storytelling is a viable place to begin (see comments by Miss O.S. in section 3.3.14).

e) Create alternate pathways to graduation

Older students with high literacy needs must have alternate pathways to graduate by the mandatory exit age of 22. The current Adult 12 route works well for youth who have been out of school for some time yet were able to gain English skills and knowledge through life experience. Students who return to school when they are over 19 are eligible to complete this seven-credit *fast track* to school completion. Such an option does not work well for students with limited first language education and high English literacy needs because of the required completion of two grade 12 English Language Arts (ELA 30) credits (see section 4.1 for students' narratives related to academic risk factors). Instead, students need a program based on essential skills for integration into society that is relevant to marginalized youth, and provides the opportunity to acquire the coveted secondary diploma and graduate with peers. Although this essential skills diploma would not be the prerequisite needed for admission to most post-secondary programs, students must be given reassurance that upgrading at an adult education facility can occur when their language skills have reached an appropriate level. Like the Adult 12 program, an Essential Skills program would require fewer credits, but the classes would focus on developing the skills, literacy, and cultural capital needed for life in Canada. For example, the classes could include: introduction to Native Studies and Canadian diversity; introduction to Canadian history; essential math skills; cooking and nutrition; community-based wellness/fitness; science for health; communication; Canadian literature; drivers' education. The classes must be community-based and hands-on with materials created to meet the literacy needs of the students. All the classes need an underlying mandate to build resilience and emotional wellbeing.

f) Collect data on early school leaving

To the best of my knowledge, no Saskatchewan data has been collected on the number of youth, who arrived as immigrants or refugees, enrolled in school in the province, but dropped out without secondary completion (see section 2.1.1 for literature related to early school leaving). Without a doubt, systematic data collection of highly mobile people is complex. Perhaps consultation with the Ministries of Education in other provinces would help to guide a Saskatchewan study.

8.5.3 University Policy

a) Enhance pre-service teacher training

In the milieu of rapid immigration and a growing First Nations population, all Saskatchewan teachers must be prepared to deal with the challenges of culturally diverse, additional language learners (see section 6.1.2 regarding teachers as allies). There is a great need for teachers to become sensitized to the impact of trauma on youth who have experienced, witnessed or heard of traumatic events (see Miss O.S.'s story in section 5.4). It is not the goal to prepare teachers to become counsellors, but to *inform* the adults who spend significant time with youth. Teachers at all levels of experience would benefit from instruction on how to use storytelling as a teaching strategy, how to develop a sense of trust with marginalized youth, and how to become active, empathetic listeners. To the best of my knowledge, no such Saskatchewan program exists at the time of my dissertation completion.

All teacher candidates would benefit from classes on cultural diversity and the impact of traumatic events on students' capacity to learn. For teacher candidates interested in focusing on a career with culturally diverse students, enhanced training is needed to move beyond lesson planning and to recognize the social, emotional and academic needs of youth. Inspiring teacher

candidates to see the value in cultural awareness will encourage them to learn about their future students' cultures, to be curious, open-minded, and most importantly, to be empathetic.

b) Encourage action research with youth

Marginalized youth have a great deal of wisdom and insight to share. Qualitative, action research is engaging for youth and works towards anti-oppression by putting youth at the centre. A university mandate to validate the findings of qualitative studies would serve to encourage academic researchers to explore this path (see Section 3.1 for literature on action research).

8.5.4 School Division Policy

School division administrators can support and enhance government policies by implementing teacher training and school climates that promote social justice, celebrate diversity every day, and make more concerted efforts to eliminate racism. School division policy is needed to maintain the humanity of teaching in light of newcomer language assessment and to encourage teachers to see themselves as action researchers gathering stories of students' experiences. Administrator allies are crucial to the success of policy change that buffers risk and supports resilience of youth.

a) In-service teacher training

A concerted effort is required to guarantee that all Saskatchewan in-service teachers, who are experts in their own fields, have knowledge regarding the influence of migration, trauma, and culture on learning (see Sandman's comments in section 6.1.2). All in-service teachers in Saskatchewan need the opportunity to learn about the strengths and needs of students and the teacher's role in supporting the resilience of youth. In order to adequately address the academic, social, and emotional needs of youth new to Canada, it is essential to consider factors that support resilience as well as both pre- and post-migration risks.

b) Cultural sensitivity training for all school staff

When we consider the academic, social, and emotional needs of children, we need to be responsive when they are outside as well as inside the classroom. All school staff requires cultural sensitivity training to develop the empathy and understanding of culturally different practices (see Mr. Jack's comment in section 6.1.2). Caretakers, secretaries, educational assistances, counsellors and administrators play important roles in the education of children. We are all responsible.

c) Maintain the humanity of teaching

With the implementation of language assessment across the province, it is imperative for school divisions to maintain an atmosphere of humanity (See Halwa and Adnan's comments in section 6.1.1). When students are referred to as *the A1.1s* or *a new batch of Bs*, it only serves to reduce students to their language level. This harkens back to the days of the euphemistically-named Eagles, Robins, and Sparrows that everyone knew represented advanced, regular, and struggling readers. We must not revert to such damaging systems but remain ever cognizant of the *whole* child. In order to enhance resilience, school divisions must instruct teachers to move away from a deficit model and focus on youths' strengths. As a social constructionist, I believe that the language we use influences how we think, so referring to students by their language level, dehumanizes the teaching situation, and negates feelings of compassion for learners.

d) Train teachers to be researchers

When school divisions encourage and support teachers to become action researchers, the benefit is multi-faceted (See Ms. G's comment in sections 3.3.13 and 6.1.2). Teacher-researchers move beyond the scenario that maintains *it's the teacher's responsibility to create the lesson and present it, and it's the student's responsibility to learn*. Teacher-researchers

question why students do not learn and make it their responsibility to find solutions. Those who are intimidated by *research* may connect with the concept of collecting stories as an everyday practice to inform and direct their classroom activities. In-service training is required to teach educators to be story-collectors.

e) Increase alternative in-school supports

Since Western counselling methods seldom have long-term success with culturally diverse youth, alternative programs must be increased. The Settlement Support Worker in Schools (SSWIS) program has great potential to support youth in ways that are culturally appropriate and effective. Having SSWIS in each school for longer, regular time periods provides youth security and comfort, which is crucial for youth who may have difficulty trusting and feeling safe (See November's comment in section 4.2.4). SSWIS bridge the gap between home and school. They can provide a safe, culturally appropriate space for youth to engage in healing activities when a face-to-face meeting with an unknown counsellor is an unfamiliar practice. The on-going debate regarding who is financially responsible for the SSWIS program must be solved. The importance of the program has been shown; the funding must be found.

f) Administrators as allies

School administrators are in a very powerful position to advocate for the best possible learning environment for marginalized students. Administrators who lobby for smaller class sizes and in-school supports have the potential to make changes and implement recommendation made by teachers (See David Starr's comments in section 8.4). Teachers of culturally diverse students are typically strong allies of youth, but their recommendations for changes in school policy can be perceived as self-serving. Suggestions for smaller classes and funding requests for social and classroom supports may be seen as teachers' attempts to reduce their workload. They

are not. Students with high needs require well-funded programs in order to have the best opportunity for academic success.

8.6 Building Communities Devoted to Youth Resilience

Social change begins with individual change. Hearing the stories of marginalized youth can do much to discontinue the “rosy stereotype of resilience” (Beiser et al., 2005) such as : “youth are resilient; they bounce back so quickly; if youth take advantage of opportunities, they will be do well; and unsuccessful youth need to try harder.” Social barriers are created if youth who do not *bounce back*, are seen as deficient or unwilling to integrate. When youth marginalized by race, poverty, and limited academic skills, are considered to be the purveyors of their own ill fate, it only serves to separate the community into *us* and *them*. Negative relations adds to the accumulation of risk when, in fact, increased social support is identified by youth as being a primary factor in building resilience and increasing the capacity to live well.

The youth in this study clearly identified teacher advocates, supportive peers, and a welcoming school and community atmosphere as being of great importance. They also articulated the value of family members who instill strong cultural, religious, and social justice values. The youth were often able to point to the particular places, activities, and people which make significant contributions to their wellbeing. This is pertinent because youth in general and young people with little formal education in particular, have not been considered valued sources of knowledge (Yonezawa & Jones, 2007). Youth in this study have done much to negate that stereotype since they have provided great insights into the emotional, social, and academic factors that contribute to risk or support resilience.

Teachers and support workers can play a large role in working toward social change by introducing youth to participatory action research and the use of Photovoice. Although it is often

necessary to temper students' seemingly endless internet search for the perfect photo, the situation presents an opening for meaningful conversations. As the student becomes the instructor and explains the photo as well as historical and geographical details, the conditions are ideal for engaging learning and language use. As well, adult allies have opportunities to understand the student's life and the condition that caused migration. The challenge is to create opportunities for youth to be heard by more members of the community.

Supporting teachers, school staff, and settlement workers to support students is imperative because the relationships between adult allies and youth supersede all else. Building an atmosphere of trust and caring is a priority when working with cultural minority students (Klinger, 2012). The "ordinary magic" (Masten, 2001) of enhancing youth resilience is the responsibility for all citizens. While *social constructionism* explains how our values and beliefs are shaped by the community in which we are raised, *constructivism* makes clear that we have the agency or power to shape the world around us (Crotty, 1998). Policy amendment at the federal, provincial, university, and school division levels can serve to make our world more just.

Some policy recommendations, such as smaller class size and additional staff training come with a high financial investment but also a high return when youth are successful at school, at work, and in the community. Other policy recommendations require little or perhaps no financial expenditure. In the latter category is the most important student-identified factor in building resilience: positive social relationships. Offering friendship and listening to the voice of youth requires minimal financial investment, but for youth marginalized by poverty, race, gender, education, and cultural misunderstandings, the feeling of being welcomed, accepted, and supported is invaluable.

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Appendix A

Letter of Invitation to Students

Date

Dear

I am writing to tell you about a research project I am doing. It is called *Literacy, Wellbeing and Hope: Voices of secondary students who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration* [original title]. The project is for the research part of my university degree (PhD thesis). The project will begin in November, 2010 and finish at the end of January 2011. **I am asking if you would like your work to be in my report called a dissertation.**

I am doing the research study in [Miss O. S.'s] grade eleven English Language Arts class at [name of school]. I want to know what immigrant and refugee students need at school. I am wondering if telling stories can help newcomer youth adjust to life in Canada. I am also trying to find out if high school students who arrive as immigrants and refugees like to use storytelling to learn English. We are using storytelling because everyone tells stories. Also, I hope students will learn the words that are important to them.

The students have several choices of how they tell their stories. They can write and draw on paper. They can use the computer. Also, they can write a story about photographs they have taken or found. In all choices, students can use English and their first language.

The topics for discussion were made to help newcomer youth adjust to life in a new country. Some of the topics are:

1. The meaning of my name
2. My school in my first country. My school in Canada
3. Greeting people in my first country and in Canada
4. People who are important to me
5. Friendships

The students may share their thoughts and feelings or pass (not talk) if they wish. At the end of each lesson, the students write about what they liked and what they did not like about this way of learning English. I will interview (talk to students alone) about what they liked and did not like. We will also have a sharing celebration for parents where students can show what they have made.

I will write about this project for my university degree (PhD thesis). I will also write about this project for meetings and conferences. I will not say the names of the students or the name of the school. The students will give themselves different names for the report. The students can choose what stories I tell in my writing. I will not repeat any stories unless the student gives me permission. The student participants will see the results of the study before I present the information to other people. Your son or daughter has a paper that tells how students will be protected if they want to join this project.

Students may stay in the class even if you do not want to be in the research study. If students do want to participate, it will not cause any problems for their marks. Students can leave the project any time. The counsellor will find a new class. The classroom teacher will give

the marks. I will not help give the marks. You will have the right to withdraw until June 30, 2011. After this I will have shared the research in some form

This project has been approved by Principal [name] and [ethics supervisor of the school division]. You can call me for more information. My school number is [***-****]. My email is kgeres@yahoo.com. You may also contact my supervisor Dr. Carolyn Brooks at 966-5814 or carolyn.brooks@usask.ca.

Sincerely,

Koreen Geres

CONSENT FORM – INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUP

FOR YOUTH 18 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER

To be distributed and signed prior to beginning the interviews and focus group/class discussion.

Consent to Participate: I read the letter from Ms Geres, and I understand what it means. I have been given a chance to ask questions and my questions have been answered, so I can understand. I consent to participate in the study described above. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me to keep.

(Signature of Participant)

(Signature of Researcher)

TRANSCRIPT REVIEW– FOCUS GROUP/CLASS DISCUSSION

I, _____, have been given the opportunity to review the complete transcript of the focus group/class discussion in the study **Literacy, Wellbeing and Hope: Voices of secondary students who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration** [original title].

_____ I would like to review the transcript. If I choose to review the transcript, I will have the opportunity to add, change, and delete information from the transcript. I know that I will be asked to sign a transcript release if I choose to review the transcript.

_____ I do not want to review the transcript.

I have received a copy of this form to keep.

Participant

Date

Researcher

Date

TRANSCRIPT REVIEW – INTERVIEW

I, _____, have been given the opportunity to review the complete transcript of my personal interview in the study **Literacy, Wellbeing and Hope: Voices of secondary students who have experienced interrupted education and forced migration** [original title].
I understand that student participants will see the results of the study prior to wider dissemination.

_____ I would like to review the transcript. If I choose to review the transcript, I will have the opportunity to add, change, and delete information from the transcript. I know that I will be asked to sign a transcript release if I choose to review the transcript.

_____ I do not want to review the transcript.

I have received a copy of this form to keep.

_____ Participant	_____ Date
_____ Researcher	_____ Date

Appendix B

Request for Photo Release

June 15, 2011

Dear Parents,

In semester one (November 2010 to January 2011) I conducted research for a PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies. As part of my project, English as an additional language students gave me stories they wrote for English Language Arts and Computer Processing classes. Some of the stories included photographs taken by students during field trips and special events. For example, students took photos during a [field trip] and during a multi-culture day.

I am asking your permission to include photos of your son or daughter in my research and as part of presentations I will be making at conferences. It is your choice, and if you say "no" your daughter or son's marks will not be affected in any way. The first conference will be on July 6, 2011 in Vancouver. It is called IVSA. It is for sociologists and educators devoted to the visual study of society, culture, and social relationships.

For my dissertation and the conference presentations, I will not name the city, the school, or the student. For conference presentations the photos will be used in a Power Point presentation. The audience will not receive a handout of the presentation.

As I told you in the previous letter about my research, this project has been approved by the University of Saskatchewan and [the school division]. If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact me at [***-****] or kgeres@yahoo.com or you can contact my supervisor Dr. Carolyn Brooks at carolyn.brooks@usask.ca or 966-5814.

Please complete the bottom of this letter and return it to me by June 24, 2011.

Sincerely,

Koreen Geres

.....

☐ Yes, Koreen Geres may use photos of my son or daughter in her dissertation and at conference presentations.

☐ No, Koreen Geres may not use photos of my son or daughter.

Student's Name (please print): _____

Parent's signature: _____ Date: _____

Student's Signature if over 18 years of age _____ Date: _____